

Proper 6
Cycle C RCL

1 Kings 21:1-10 (11-14) 15-21a

The Deuteronomistic Historian (Dtr), responsible for Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings, uses the legendary material at hand to emphasize the idea from Deuteronomy that those who violate the law of the Lord risk ruin and destruction. Deuteronomy's corollary to that proposition is that those who are faithful to the law of prosperity and longevity (Deuteronomy 4:1-14), but this corollary does not seem to be much in evidence in this story or, indeed, in Dtr's accounts of other unfortunates like Uriah and Amnon. At issue in this story is the inviolability of the ancient landmark. While in our culture the buying and selling of land is a matter of course, Deuteronomy presents the ancient landmarks as inviolable and curses those who might remove them (Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:17). Naboth then is acting righteously to refuse the king's lucrative proposal. Ahab's response to Naboth's righteous refusal is to pout (21:2). To please her husband, and end his petulant behavior Queen Jezebel takes over and hatches an elaborate but successful plot to get Naboth out of the way (21:5-12). The spineless king, now having some degree of "deniability," does not shed any tears over Naboth's demise and goes to the field to incorporate it into his holdings. In other words, he has still violated the law about removing the ancient landmark. The Lord has the prophet Elijah that Ahab is guilty both of the blood of Naboth and of removing the ancient landmark and will pay for these crimes with an ignominious death (21:17-19).

Psalm 5:1-8

Although Psalm 5 is more like an *individual lament* than any other form, it lacks any actual complaint about any harm the psalmist may have suffered. This unusual feature has led some to speculate about the possible existence of a court of law within the temple complex (*e. g.* H. Schmidt). Mowinkel and others of the Scandinavian "myth and ritual school" believe that the psalm is a ritual associated with a new year's festival in which Yahweh will once more subdue the forces of the underworld. Interesting as these proposals—and others like them—may be, there is no attestation in scripture for either a temple judiciary or for a new year's festival of the type supposed by the Scandinavians. The fact that the psalmist may offer this prayer in the temple means that he has committed no sin against God that has resulted in punishment. By way of contrast see Psalm 51:4-5 where the psalmist's complaint derives directly from the punishment God is exacting for sins against God. And threatens expulsion from the "presence" of God in the temple cult (Psalm 51:12). Above all, the aim of Psalm 5 is a request for protection in the future against the wicked who may indeed lie in wait for the psalmist (Psalm 5:8).

or

2 Samuel 11:26-12:10, 13-15

The Deuteronomistic Historian (Dtr) understood David's rape of Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah as the act which began the downfall of the Davidic dynasty and the nation of Israel. As a consequence of David's despicable actions, God tells the king that his dynasty will never be free of violence (12:10). Our writer uses the keyword "send" to represent David's arrogance and sloth in not accompanying the army of Israel and the ark of God to Rabbah. David "sent" Joab, the army, and the ark to Rabbah (11:1). David sent to inquire about the woman he saw bathing (11:3). He sent servants to bring her to him (11:4). Now God sends Nathan 12:1 to convict David of his sin and to announce his punishment.

Psalm 32

Laments often promise to announce God's salvation or to instruct others in God's way if God answers the psalmist's plea. See, for instance, Psalm 51:13. The fulfillment of this promise took the form of a *thanksgiving* psalm. In general, a thanksgiving summarizes the original lament (32:5) and then proceeds to tell everyone who will listen of God's faithfulness to those who keep the divine commandments. In this particular case the lament in question was a lament of guilt, and the psalmist addresses those who, like him, are sinners.

Galatians 2:15-21

The original Galatians were Celts who invaded Asia Minor and settled in the region of Ancyra (modern Ankara, Turkey) in the third century BC. Roman Galatia, however, extended from Lystra and Derbe all the way across Asia Minor to Amasia in the north, *i. e.* almost from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea. Since Paul identifies

his readers only as “the churches in Galatia (Galatians 1:1),” interpreters have differed strongly on their exact location of these churches. Interpreters have differed also on the nature of the controversy Paul addressed. It is clear that his opponents insist that new converts adopt certain Jewish practices such as circumcision, but it is not clear why. Some interpreters would suggest that these opponents believe Christ’s messiahship and salvation derive only from Judaism and that Gentiles must first become Jewish to receive the benefits of Christ. Other investigators contend that the opponents are Gnostics who encourage converts to adopt only certain Jewish practices in order to subvert the evil rulers of the present age.

Luke 7:36-8:3

Although this story is loosely related to the story of the woman who anointed Jesus before his arrest (Mark 14:3-9; Matthew 26:6-13), Luke’s narrative is strikingly different. The scene is a dinner in the home of Simon the Pharisee (7:36). The Pharisaic movement seems to have been a table-fellowship movement in which a common meal was the occasion for discussion of Pharisaic teaching; and one of the important teachings of the Pharisees was the rigid separation of the world of women from that of men, so the woman’s action of actually touching Jesus’ feet makes her a sinner in the eyes of the assembled scholars. Jesus’ argument is twofold: (1) If the woman is a great sinner, then she will love the one who forgives her even more than a person who is not a great sinner. Hence her action is justified as an act of gratitude (7:41-43). (2) The woman has provided the ordinary rites of hospitality Simon omitted (7:44-46) and by her righteous action deserves forgiveness of her sins. The real question is the source of Jesus’ authority to forgive sins (7:49).

Luke 8:1-3 is an editorial transition from the story of the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet to a long series of teachings (8:4-21) and miracles (8:22-55). The role of the women with Jesus is important to the writer even as there is little clarity about their status. The author calls the students of Jesus “the Twelve” while referring to the women as simply “some women.” Their importance, however, is clear from the fact that the author names them. Also striking is the fact that they are mentioned with the Twelve just before Jesus teaches a crowd and the small circle of his students to whom he reveals the secret of the parable of the sower (8:9-15). Apparently, the women receive the mystery too, for it is “the students/disciples” (Greek *mathetai*) who are addressed, suggesting that the group was not limited to the Twelve. The reference to Mary of the Galilean city of Magdala from whom seven devils “had gone out, points only to the severity of Mary’s previous affliction. There is no justification for identifying her as the “sinner” in 7:36-50 and no warrant at all for considering her a woman of questionable morals.