

Sunday Readings Reflections of 6/5/2016

Reading 1 1 Kings 17:17-24

The prophet Elijah is journeying again. How often the Lord calls prophets to leave where they are and to go to another place, another people. Likewise, prophets are often dependent on the hospitality of those they go to for a place to stay and for food. Now Elijah is in Sidon and welcomed by a widow. Interesting that when her son becomes ill, she immediately blames the prophet for causing the illness! But Elijah calls on the Lord and the Lord heals the widow's son. Now she is ready to believe that Elijah is a man of God who speaks the word of the Lord.

Reading 2 Galatians 1:11-19

Paul seems to have a challenge similar to Elijah's. His letter begins with an effort to explain that his preaching is not from human sources. Did people doubt him as the widow doubted Elijah? But Paul's proof does not lie in a miraculous healing, rather he points to his own conversion: from being a persecutor of Christians to being a prophet to the Gentiles. When we see a profound change for the good in another, it is understandable that we are curious as to what motivated the change. Paul tells us clearly that his change is due to God's action in his life. God graced Paul, revealed his Son to him and gave him a mission. Paul, like Elijah, journeys to proclaim God's word.

Gospel Luke 7:11-17

It is easy to see the continuity of themes among the readings and the Gospel. Jesus, like Elijah and Paul, is also journeying. And, like Elijah, Jesus encounters a widow whose only son has died. This son is already in a coffin and is being carried out for burial. We can only imagine the depth of the widow's grief. She is not begging Jesus to do something—it is not clear that she even notices him, she is focused only on her loss. It is Jesus who notices her. "He was moved with pity for her." Did he somehow see in her his own mother? Did he realize that Mary's only Son would die too? Was it his love for his own mother that made him see other women and their pain more clearly? He stops the funeral procession and touches the coffin and tells the dead man to rise. And he does! Now the people around him recognize Jesus as a great prophet. There is nothing like a miracle to lead the crowd to glorify God. It is a happy ending to this Gospel story, but of course, it will not last. The crowd is fickle and perhaps some who witnessed this miracle were among those who called for Jesus' death.