

**(For Monday, October 2, 2017) What effect are you having on the future of those dear to you?**

*“So these nations feared the Lord and also served their carved images. Their children did likewise, and their children’s children – as their fathers did, so they do to this day.” (2Kings 17:41, ESV)*

The pantheon of polytheistic heresy in the Northern Kingdom which began toward the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC may seem remote and inapplicable to modern society. But there are at least two lessons for us here. First, there is the evidence that a true worship of the Sovereign Lord cannot be one of indiscriminate tolerance of all faith convictions. Yes, you and I are called to “respect the dignity of every human being” (Baptismal Covenant, *Book of Common Prayer*), but that doesn’t mean relinquishing our insistence that Jesus is the Only Begotten Son of God. Secondly, there is the proof here of the remarkably permanent effect the behavior patterns of a single generation have on those who come after them. If the *Book of Kings* was compiled sometime between Jehoicahin’s release from imprisonment and the end of the Babylonian Exile, that would indicate that the heretical syncretism begun by a generation of emigrants to the Northern Kingdom kept being practiced for close-on a century-and-a-half.

How will your own actions in these days affect generations of your friends and family yet unborn?

**(For Tuesday, October 3, 2017) Who’s really driving?**

*“The King in his might loves justice. You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.” (Ps.99:4, ESV)*

When you consider the mournful weight of these days, with the massacre this week in Las Vegas it is too easy to give ourselves over to despair. I told a Jewish friend of mine yesterday that for a believer like me, these are such heavy days in The Kingdom. Yet our God still reigns. That’s the message of Psalm 99. And this psalm is also a description of the wonderfully inclusive covering of God’s protection. It’s a recollection that The Lord God will bless all peoples if we let him, as he promised to Abraham in the beginning. (See Gen.22:18; Ps. 99:3) But be careful! Because the only way for God to institute and prosper his reign of peace, and justice, and righteousness is if his people are willing to profess and live into his sovereignty. And so, we are called to go worship him not only on his exalted mountain (v.9), but to humble ourselves in obedience and worship at his footstool as well (v.5). The only way for us to achieve that peace that passes all understanding is for us to turn over control of our lives to the Lordship of God. His Kingdom is the only one where you and I will find that perfect refuge, and safety, and peace that lasts forever more.

So what about you? Who’s in control?

**(For Wednesday, October 4, 2017) Do you understand the wideness of his mercy?**

*“But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.” (1Cor.8:3)*

This is an intriguing verse, particularly when you consider where Jesus talks about God “knowing people.” That phrase (in the negative) occurs in Mt.7:23 and Lk. 13:21, when Jesus declares the condemnation of those who profess to love God but don’t act upon that love. The tenant of this verse would seem to lead us toward envisioning a host of the redeemed, which is much more inclusive than some would have us believe. So, if a person truly lives his/her life in service to the Lord of Love, loving God in word and deed, such a person is “known by God,” and therefore welcomed into the fold of the Saints in Light. This does NOT require us to embrace universalism, nor are we called to relinquish the foundational belief that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, and all come to The Father by him. (Jn.14:7)

However, doesn’t this seem to indicate an inclusiveness and power in God’s plan of salvation that is wider than many might believe? Oh how wide the arms of Jesus on the Cross!

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**(For Thursday, October 5, 2017) Who's in and who's out?**

*"On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do mighty works in your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" (Mt.7:22-23, EVS)*

The phraseology Jesus uses here "Depart from me!" ties these verses even more closely to another passage which shares the same theme of Judgement Day, specifically Mt.25:31-46. As noted in yesterday's **Office Memo** the soteriological theology (the part of Christian theology that focuses on salvation) is pretty inclusive. The redeemed are those who live out their lives in a commitment to "love their neighbors as themselves," with special acts of love and mercy practiced selflessly for the "least of my [that is, Christ's] brothers and sisters." (See Mt.25:40) There's no specific requirement that we all abide by a specific worship rite, or a limited list of "acceptable" Christian denominations. But there is a broken-ness in all of us that leads toward a really destructive practice of exclusivity; there's a part of us that resents admitting those who are too different from us into the "club" of the redeemed. A chilling demonstration of this is found in John 11:45-53. The thing that finally drove the Pharisees to concoct their plot to murder Jesus was their fear that Jesus was going to draw everyone (even the outcast Gentiles!) to believe in him (See Jn.11:48), and gather to God all the disparate children of God (See Jn.11:51). And since this inclusive character of the Christian faith would rob the Pharisees of their exclusive "specialness" in the religious order of the day, they determined to murder God's son.

Each time we do something to deny someone the kindness and charity which are our Christian responsibility, don't we participate with the Pharisees in the wounding of Love?

**(For Friday, October 6, 2017) Do you realize the awesome assurance of God's promises?**

*"When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, 'Truly I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.'" (Mt.8:10, ESV)*

In this passage about the humble Centurion there is presented the inalienable linkage between faith and obedience. Faith as evidenced in the mature Christian man or woman is almost always apparent. Sometimes it's not even something you can "put your finger on." But we generally have a sense when we are in the calm, convicted, joyous presence of the man or woman who has spent years and decades in a humble walk with God. And a huge part of working out that kind of faith in fear and trembling has to do with obedience. Being obedient to your faith in God's infinite mercy and righteousness, even in the challenge of great pain and adversity – **that** is the real crucible in which great faith is forged. This humble Centurion has lived his life as a man of obedience, and he has seen what kind of authority that sort of obedience fosters. So he knows in the very depths of his soul that if a being such as Jesus who can even calm storms, heal the lame, give sight to the blind, and cast out demons – well this Roman Officer **knows** that when a man with **that** kind of authority speaks, his word is a divine promise of healing and salvation.

Have you reached that point through a long-standing obedience to God of knowing just how unshakable are the promises of God for our lives?

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