

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

November 7, 2021

Old Testament Reading; 1 Kings 17: 8-16

Responsive Reading; Psalm 146

Epistle Reading; Hebrews 9: 24-48

Gospel Reading; Mark 12: 38-44

Sermon Title:

Aren't You Glad You Know Him?

By Rev. Jim Garner

Summary; Know God, Love God. Be known by God and to be Loved by God. That should about cover it.

Our scriptures today start right out with God sending Elijah to Zarephath in the region of Sidon. God told Elijah that He had made arrangements for a gentile widow to care for him there.

In this account the woman and her child are about to starve to death as she only has a little flour and a small amount of cooking oil to turn it into bread. She tells Elijah her predicament and he still asks her to fix him some bread first. This seems selfish but she does it anyway. Then the miracle, the flour and oil last "many" days, actually three and a half years, and feeds

her, her son, Elijah and her whole household for that entire time.

Later in the gospel of Luke, Jesus mentions this incident and notes that there were many starving Jewish widows at this time and God chose to send Elijah to a gentile woman.

Two lessons are shown here. First, God sees all people as important, not only the “chosen” people and second when the widow gave her first bread to God’s prophet, God took care of her and her whole family. If we trust in God, and give God our first fruits, He will take care of us too.

Today’s Psalm is where I got the title for this message.

Psalm 146 expounds on the glory of God and how we should put our faith in Him and not man, or even “special” men like princes. After the Psalmist declares his praise of God, he tells us why. He says, “happy is he who trusts in the God of Jacob,” He goes on to say that not only is God the great creator, but He gives more. God, “keeps truth forever”, “executes Justice for the oppressed”, “gives food to the hungry”, “freedom to the prisoners”, “watches over strangers”, and, “relieves the fatherless and widow”. “But the way of the wicked He turns upside down. The Lord shall reign forever- Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!”

After this explanation that I shamelessly plagiarized from the Believers Bible Commentary, by William MacDonald, that author put in italics, “Aren’t you glad you know Him?”

It seems that this Psalm is so meaningful to him that he just had to add his personal feelings to his teachings. When I saw the author’s reaction, I read the Psalm over again and I had to agree that this definitely is special!

In our Epistle lesson in Hebrews, Paul shows how God one-ups the lesson in the Old Testament by showing how permanent and perfect God’s love is. Not only are mortal men and princes not reliable to put our trust in, even priests fall short when compared to Jesus. God gave us Jesus.

Jesus once said, “I do not come to replace the law. I come to fulfill the law.”

In our gospel lesson Jesus reaffirms the Psalmist and supplies fodder for Paul’s epistle. Jesus says, “Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows’ houses and for pretense make long prayers.”

When you get favorable praise for doing something it is very easy to get your priorities turned around. It is still a problem among preachers and priests. If we pad our pockets and/or

egos “doing God’s work” then we are not actually doing God’s work, or, even worse we may be doing the work of the other guy. It is so important that we preachers remain humble and know that God is building the kingdom and we are just tools in His hands.

In our gospel lesson Jesus goes on to say that it is not just the preachers that have to mind their p’s and q’s, it is everyone who professes Christ as their Lord and Savior.

At the money box rich people are dropping large amounts of money in the box, and you can bet it is in hard coins that make a lot of noise so everyone in the place will applaud their “selfless generosity”.

Jesus keeps trying to impress on us that the real measure of success is God’s version and not man’s version. Man says, “Look out for number one. If you take care of yourself first then you will be able to drop more money in the box later.” God says, “take care of others first and I will take care of you.”

A more exact quote would be found Matthew 6: 31-33.

“Therefore, do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Jesus says that God is more impressed with the widow’s penny than

all the money of the rich. You say you only have a penny. Well that is all God wants from you. Aren't you glad you know him? Hallelujah and Amen!