

Cindy Bassett

The Bible Corner



The contest on Mt. Carmel

Queen Jezebel had not spoken a single word to the man who stood before the throne, but, even so, he could not mistake her feelings. It was clearly written in her eyes — she despised Elijah and all he stood for.

Instead of replying to Elijah's indictment of her, she turned to King Ahab and snapped, "I thought we had executed all of these prophets of Israel when I came to power here."

"Yes, dear, I did sign that order," King Ahab stammered. "In fact, it was the same day we built the altar to Baal."

"Then what about him?" Queen Jezebel demanded, pointing a finger with a long, red nail.

King Ahab had learned that his wife would not easily be put off by feeble excuses. He left her words hanging in the air and blushed slightly until Elijah's words exploded in the silence.

"I condemn you both for your actions!" Elijah shouted. "But, you, King Ahab, are perhaps even guiltier. In your attempt to satisfy the whims of a wife who has no regard for the one true God, you have led the entire nation of Israel astray. And for that you shall be punished!"

"How dare you defy me!" Queen Jezebel shrieked. "May Baal, the god above all gods, strike you dead for your foolish words here today!"

Elijah turned on his heel to leave, but just as he reached the door, he stopped and yelled back at them, "I may be the only prophet left of the one true God. But, as surely as my God lives, there won't be one drop of rain in all of the land until I say so!"

It didn't rain for three years thereafter, just as Elijah had prophesied. The entire country was devastated by the drought. Baal, the god of weather and fertility, was invoked, but not a single drop of rain fell in all the land.

Finally, one day, the Lord commanded Elijah, "Go back to King Ahab and tell him that even though he has turned his heart away from me, I will send rain again soon."

When Elijah found him, King Ahab said, "I wish you had died! You have ruined our country."

"Ah, but you are sadly mistaken; this is all your fault," Elijah retorted. "You married a pagan wife from a foreign nation and allowed her to destroy our altars and build temples to the false god, Baal."

"Well what is to be done now?" King Ahab asked.

"I hereby challenge your god, Baal, to a contest on Mount Carmel."

"I accept," King Ahab quickly agreed, for the drought was so severe that food was running out.

A short time later, King Ahab had gathered all of the 850 false prophets of the country as well as the people of Israel on the mountain.

Elijah addressed the assembly, saying, "It is time to decide whom you will serve, the God of your ancestors or Baal!"

Elijah instructed the people to bring two young bulls for a sacrifice and choose one of them. "Prepare the animal for an offering upon your altar, but do not light the wood for the fire. I will do the same. Pray to your god and I will pray to mine. The God who answers by sending down fire to light the wood is the one true God." Everyone, including King Ahab, agreed to this contest.

First, the prophets of Baal performed their sacrifice. All morning long, they danced around the altar and chanted: "O Baal, hear us! Show us your great power!" But there was no answer.

At noon, Elijah began to mock them, saying to the crowds, "Why doesn't Baal hear you? Perhaps he is asleep."

Still these prophets continued to rave and call upon Baal until they had worked themselves up into a frenzy. They would have continued, but Elijah said, "All right you've had your chance. People of Israel, come here to a sacrifice to the Lord."

Everyone crowded around to watch Elijah build an altar using 12 large stones to symbolize the 12 tribes of Israel. Then he prepared the offering on this altar and dug a trench all around it, filling the area with water. "Pour water over both the sacrifice and the wood," he instructed several men.

After they had repeated this strange procedure three times, the people began to murmur, "Elijah, the prophet, has lost his mind. The wood will never be ignited now."

Elijah ignored their comments. Going up to the altar, he prayed aloud, "O Lord, God of our ancestors, show these people that you alone are worthy to be called God. Answer me so that they will return to you."

Immediately, lightning flashed from the sky and struck with such force that the fire consumed the bull, the wood, the altar and all of the water in the trench.

The people were amazed and fell to their knees, proclaiming, "The Lord is God! We believe!"

Meanwhile, King Ahab went in haste to the palace to inform Queen Jezebel. And from that time on, she vowed to kill Elijah.

God protected the prophet, Elijah, all the days of his life. King Ahab is today remembered as the worst king in the entire history of Israel. And Queen Jezebel died a gruesome death just as Elijah had predicted. She was trampled by horses and eaten by dogs. When the dogs had finished with her, only Jezebel's skull, feet and the palms of her hands were left to bury. (2 Kings 9:35-36)

Scripture reference: 1 Kings, chapters 17 & 18.

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Masters of fate

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 21:28-32; (R1) Ezechiel 18:25-28; (R2) Philippians 2:1-11.

One of the basic thoughts in Sunday's liturgy is that we are responsible for our own actions (R1). We are captains of our souls and masters of our fate.

Hence God is constantly wooing us. We can change for better or for worse. The Gospel parable is a real-life situation. A father had two sons. One thinks like his father, the other does not. The first pays lip service to his father's wishes, but does not follow through. The second son protests his father's requests, but because he thinks like his father, he surprisingly changes his mind and does what his father wants.

What's the point? That we can change our minds? That's an obvious conclusion, but not the point of the parable. The parable teaches that God is the determiner of right and wrong. When we do what He wants, we're in the right; when we do not, we are in the wrong. The emphasis is not on talk, but on doing His will.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "None of those who cry out, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of God but only the one who does the will of my Father" (Matthew 7:21) In the parable, it is significant that the son who does not do the will of his father addresses his father as "Lord." "I am on my way, Sir," he said. The word translated as "sir" is in the Greek *Kyrie* — the same word Jesus used for "Lord" in Matthew 7:21. The true son is the one who does what his father wants. Of course the Son who did most perfectly the will of the Father was Jesus.

Whenever we are kneeling, we bow our heads at the name of Jesus. One of the reasons for this is to profess our faith that the man who bears that name of Jesus is also God. But a better reason is that a simple bow of the head sums up the life of Jesus. He "was not alternately 'yes' and 'no' (like the two sons); he was never anything but 'yes'" (2 Corinthians 1:19). After Jesus had done everything His Father had asked, He said, "It is finished!" Then He bowed His head, not only to show that He had accepted all that His Father had willed — even this last sacrifice, namely, death on a cross — but also to nod to Death that He was giving Death permission to take the life of Him who is the Life! He became obedient, "accepting even death, death on a cross!"

Paul says, "Your attitude must be

Christ's."

The key to attitudes is to be found in the mind. Three times Paul uses the Greek word for "mind." He said, "make my joy complete by your unanimity" (*phronete*) — being like-minded, thinking alike, having the same outlook on life. Like-mindedness will lead not to rivalries and conceit, but to being "united" (*phronoutes*) in spirit and ideals."

To arrive at this state of mind, we must meditate upon Christ's attitude (*phronete*). "He did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at." Adam wanted to be like God — that was his, and our, downfall. So the new Adam who was God "emptied himself and took the form of a slave" to teach us to be humble, to esteem others as superior to ourselves and to look to the interests of others.

Concepts shape attitudes, that is why meditation on the life of Christ is so important. Attitudes also determine behavior. The thoughts that enfold us are the thoughts that mold us.

A coed worked as a librarian during her sophomore year. She disliked the job — every minute of it! But she was never late, never absent without a replacement and even did extra work. At the end of the year, the student workers were called in one by one for the head librarian's evaluation.

The coed was shocked when she was reprimanded for the quality of her performance. She protested, "I've always been punctual, on the job, done every work assigned me!"

The head librarian was unimpressed. "It's your attitude," she declared. "That's your problem. Your negative attitude colored all your work."

The coed later admitted, "She taught me a lesson I'll never forget. I've learned the importance of attitude, of changing it by putting my mind — in a loving and positive way — into everything I do." Her changed attitude changed her performance.

Attitudes, mental outlook, love, enthusiasm — these made the difference between the two sons.

Attitudes are all important. But our attitudes are determined by our thinking. We must think on the life of Christ frequently as in the Gospels if we are to think at all like Christ. But once we do, we shall begin to put on His attitude. And having His attitude, we shall begin to act like Him, become truly Christian.

Renowned pianist, singer set to perform at Eastman Theatre

The Founders Club of the Sisters of Mercy has announced that it will present the first-ever collaborative appearance of renowned pianist Roger Williams and singer Roberta Peters in two shows at the Eastman Theatre in November. The stars will appear together in a production entitled "Together at Last for the First Time" on November 15, at 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. All proceeds will benefit the education fund of the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester.

Williams is one of the nation's most gifted pianist and entertainers. Nicknamed "Mr. Piano" and "The King of the Keyboards," Williams delights audiences worldwide with a repertoire of popular music, both new and old.

At the Eastman, Peters will perform songs from "My Fair Lady," "Cats," and "The Merry Widow," as well as light opera and popular tunes.

Peters is best known as one of the Metropolitan Opera's most prizes sopranos and has been connected with the Met longer than any other female star in its history. She has performed around the world, from the Soviet Union to the Orient. American audiences know her from her many television appearances as well as from her national tours of "The Sound of Music," "The Merry Widow" and "The King and I."

In "Together at Last for the First Time," Williams and Peters will collaborate on a tribute to Irving Berlin.

Tickets range in price from \$8 to \$25, and are available at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse, 1437 Blossom Road, Rochester, or call (716) 288-4817.

School plans full season

After two successful summer sessions, the Cathedral Choir School will offer its first full season in 1987-88. The school specializes in the sacred choral repertoire for young singers aged eight to 14 and was founded in the summer of 1986 through a LIFT grant administered by Arts for Greater Rochester.

Affiliated with the Royal School of Church Music of England, the choir school is an ecumenical venture which will be based in two locations this fall. On Monday nights from 6:30 to 8 p.m., rehearsals will be scheduled for St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 2000 Highland Ave., Brighton. For students who prefer a weekend rehearsal time, Saturday morning practices will take place at Sacred Heart Cathedral from 9:30 to 11 a.m.

Auditions for the fall semester may be arranged by calling (716) 377-6807. Rehearsals begin on September 19 and 21.

Meditation

For Christians

An all-day seminar on meditation will be offered on Saturday, October 10, at the Mercy Prayer Center in Rochester. The seminar will explore such forms of meditation as body/mind awareness and visualization, as practiced within a Christ-centered, scriptural orientation. For more information on registration, please call (716) 987-8430. Information is also available on a meditation group that meets weekly.

Reservation deadline: Sept. 30.

Extend birthday or anniversary wishes to family members and friends through our memorial gift program.

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