

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jan 17th 2014

In today's readings I am struck by the contrast of visions between the first reading and the Gospel. One vision leads to enslavement and the other to liberation.

In the reading from first Samuel, the elders are frustrated by their perception of lack of order and therefore ask for a king to rule them. Samuel is not pleased by the request; but God tells Samuel to grant their request, as long as he warns them of all the restrictions and burdens the king will put on them. Essentially Samuel tells them "Sure, but be careful what you ask for." The elders lack their own vision and so accept Samuel's conditions of heavy taxation, loss of family and servitude in exchange for perceived order.

In the Gospel of Mark, a man with severe physical restrictions in his life due to his paralysis has friends who help him envision freedom. Frustrated by overwhelming crowds, the friends open the roof and lower the paralyzed man down to Jesus. Jesus associates the man's paralysis with his sins and frees him both physically and spiritually through his and his friends' faith and Jesus's forgiveness.

I am not an expert in Jungian psychology, but I have read about Jung's understanding of Archetypes. According to my understanding of Jung, the sovereign (could be king or queen) is that part of us that gives us vision and tasks the realm, the other parts of ourselves. When the sovereign acts out of her/his gold (best, most authentic self), there is order, peace, and joy in the realm. But the sovereign can also act out of shadow and therefore either not be present (an abdicating king/queen) or cruel and controlling (a tyrant).

I suggest that the elders in the first reading perceive that there is no longer a king on the throne and rather than accept God's offer to be their Golden King, they request and accept a tyrant. But the vision and king energy of the paralytic man (and/or his group of friends – the passage does not really say!) strikes me as golden. They know what they want, their vision comes from a place of faith and love, they act out of that golden vision, and Jesus meets them with forgiveness, healing, liberation, and joy.

Proverbs 29:18 tells us "Where there is no vision, the people perish." I suggest where there is golden, sovereign vision borne out of faith and love, the people thrive. May we all be blessed with golden vision, the courage to act on that vision, and friends to help us break through barriers and our paralysis.

Ken Reed-Bouley