

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jun 14th 2016

As is often true with challenging Old Testament passages, I find myself digging deep to find meaning in the story of Elijah the Tishbite's admonition of Ahab and his wife Jezebel. As a woman and a feminist, the name "Jezebel" evokes the same response in me as the name "Eve" in that we are asked to understand that these women were manipulative of their apparently vulnerable husbands. This is not a particularly flattering image of either sex in terms of their strength of character! So we begin with that frustration on my part.

The difficult lesson comes with the idea that the LORD will punish Ahab for leading Israel into sin (again, not a flattering image of individuals who could not withstand the temptations brought before them) by cutting off every male in his line. I struggle with the notion of the 'sins of the fathers' being borne by their children – and yet we see the evidence that this occurs every day, across the globe. I don't mean that all of us are fallen, since that is what makes us human. But in this world many of us are also broken, having suffered the debilitating effects of varied life circumstances: addiction, broken families, poverty, cycles of violence, systemic oppression, the list goes on. Broken adults begat broken children, and the cycle is extraordinarily difficult to break. However, if each of us who are broken adorn the sackcloth and humble ourselves before God – ask God to see us in our brokenness, forgive us and heal us – we can be redeemed. I like to believe that Ahab's sons were likewise able to understand their need to ask for the mercy of the LORD, as stated in the Responsorial Psalm, and graced with forgiveness of their 'blood guilt' rather than experience the evil brought by the LORD's wrath. I choose to believe that God's grace is mine to have, for the mere humility of accepting that it is mine to have. It is yours, also.

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