

BIBLICAL RESOURCES

1 Kings 19:9, 11-13; Psalm 85 (84); Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

Matt. 14:22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. 25 And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

Matt. 14:28 Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” 29 He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” 32 When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”



INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

There are two stories here, of which the second could not exist without the first. The walking on the water is found also in Mark 6:45-52 (with his own special ending) and in Luke 6:15-21. It is worth comparing the versions to hear the distinctive voice of each writer. The story of Peter sinking is found only in Matthew.

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

(i) The narrative of this Psalm seems very close to Matthew’s account:

Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the mighty waters; they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their calamity; they reeled and staggered like drunkards, and were at their wits’ end. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out from their distress; he made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad because they had quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. Let them

thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalms 107:23–32)

(ii) But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations. (Exodus 3:13–15)

(iii) There is implied reference to Moses

Thought for the day

“Do not be afraid” is one of those expressions which goes straight to the heart. Who has not sometimes been afraid? The command not to fear combines two things: firstly, it is a recognition that yes, sometimes we are afraid; secondly, it proclaims that in the community of faith, with Jesus, God-with-us, our companion on the way, we ought really to be free from deep fear, because “all shall be well.” Let us hear again the words, “Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.”

Prayer

Lord, save us when circumstances seem to overwhelm us, when we cannot see our way forward, when we find ourselves sinking. Take us by the hand and lead to the open space of freedom and confidence in you.

traditions, important for Matthew’s community, made up mostly of Jews.

KIND OF WRITING

(i) From a technical viewpoint, this is an epiphany, that is, the story of an encounter with God, an experience of the numinous. The marks of an epiphany story are: (a) the reader knows in advance who is appearing; (b) fear and dread are the responses; (c) a recognition moment follows; (d) profound reassurance is given (“Do not be afraid”); (e) those receiving the experience grow in faith. All these elements are present. Epiphany stories in the Gospels would be the Transfiguration and the resurrection appearance narratives.

(ii) The first story is also a symbolic narrative and most closely resembles the just mentioned resurrection appearance narratives. As a story within the ministry, it doesn’t make a lot of sense – why would Jesus act like this? But as a symbolic narrative dealing with a later church situation it makes better sense. The community feels itself to be without the risen Lord; their struggles, symbolised by the sea, seem to get them nowhere; the boat could well be the church—although the

“barque of Peter” is later language; in their profound need, the Risen Lord, presents himself and gives them the deep reassurance of his presence; such reassurance leads to a new strengthening of faith in the Lord. This symbolic reading is reflected very well in the closing prayer below.

(iii) The account of Peter sinking is an appendix, a kind of example story to show that even those closest to the Lord needed again and again to put their faith in him. It might even be a symbolic version of the self-presentation of the Risen Lord to Peter, mentioned several times in the Gospels but never narrated.

NEW TESTAMENT FOREGROUND

(i) Water is a symbol of both life and death; Jesus “walking” on water symbolically has conquered both life and death.

(ii) Peter has a high profile in this Gospel, understandably given that it was written in a time of church formation, in an area and context, Antioch, where Peter was especially prominent. Matthew has the expanded confession of Peter in 16:13-20, where the keys of the kingdom are handed over to him.

(iii) Little faith in a favourite expression of Matthew (4-0-1-0): Matt 6:30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Matt 8:26 And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. Matt 14:31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” Matt 16:8 And becoming aware of it, Jesus said, “You of little faith, why are you talking about having no bread?”

ST PAUL

“And it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal 2:20)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 22 In Matthew, Jesus is often “in charge”, directing things. In this case, he compels them to depart—no reason is given, but from a narrative point of view it prepares for the divine manifestation to come.

Verse 23 Jesus acts like Moses in going up the mountain to pray. At this point,

Jesus is alone and the disciples are separated from him.

Verse 24 Futile effort and impossible odds are symbolised by the sea (Ps 18:7; 32:6; 69:2). There is no explanation of why or how this happened—that’s not the point because the scene is really an image of the community struggling.

Verse 25 Early in the morning may recall resurrection appearances. But, at the same time, it refers to the fourth watch, that is between 3.00 and 6.00 AM), that is, the darkest hour of the night, but also the time of God’s help (Ex 14:24; Ps 46:5). Walking on the sea is a symbol of power over death. Any naturalistic explanations (“it was foggy and he was really walking on the *shore*”) are beside the point. The same Jesus has already calmed the storm in this Gospel (8:22-27). It is not the miracle of walking that we are asked to believe, but the even harder conviction that Jesus has power and victory over sin, death and evil.

Verse 26 The reactions are part of the epiphany style. The correct etiquette, should you have such a vision, is to be terrified. This is not really psychological fright but rather awe before the power of the divine.

Verse 27 “Courage” is exactly what they need; “It is I” = the name YHWH from Ex 3:14. See also Deut 32:39; Is 41:4; 43:1-13. *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.* (Isaiah 43:2)

Verse 28 Even in symbolic narrative, Peter’s impetuous, blunt character comes through. This is the first of several instances where Peter takes centre stage. Are we to view him positively or negatively? Peter *does* respond to Jesus’ symbolic power over death and does ask to be saved. He *does* have faith, however small. At the same time his request is impulsive and presumptuous (only God controls death). Who is Peter to test Jesus? Peter wants to leave the boat, thus spectacularly abandoning the others!

Verse 29 “Walking on the water” means, in symbolic terms, sharing the victory of the Risen Lord. This is true of us all baptism and true later on when our own faith falters.

Verse 30 A bit late in the day!!! His prayer to be saved does, however, come from the heart. The text doesn’t say here that Peter doubted (an attitude) but that he became frightened (a feeling). In this

verse, “to sink” is the same word in 18:6, where it means “go down.” Save, in the context, means rescue but symbolically means save in the sense of salvation.

Verse 31 Tremendous image of Jesus reaching out and catching hold of him. The “immediately” is good — the direct response to the prayer to be saved.

Verse 32 The calm they desired, from the Psalm. Suddenly, it is all over; symbolically, the crisis has passed.

Verse 33 Then comes the moment of worship. While the story does portray both church and discipleship, the real centre is Christology—who is Jesus? Jesus is worshipped from the very start by the Magi, in this Gospel.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. The story illustrates the power of faith. Have you noticed that when you believe in someone, or something, you can do things that would not be possible when you are full of doubts? Recall moments when your faith gave you strength and courage? Name for yourself the different kinds of faith that had this effect: belief in yourself, trust in another, faith in God.

2. When Jesus got into the boat the winds ceased. Who has been a Jesus person for you and helped to calm a storm that frightened you or made you anxious?

3. The experience of Peter gives encouragement to us when we waver in our trust and belief in God. In his doubt and fear Jesus reached out to him. Who has reached out a helping hand to you when you felt you were sinking?

4. The story ends with a profession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Have you had experiences of being rescued from some hazard or danger, experiences which deepened your faith in the presence and compassion of God for you?

PRAYER

God of all power, your sovereign word comes to us in Christ. When your church is in danger, make us firm in our trust; when your people falter, steady our faith.

Show us in Jesus your power to save, that we may always acclaim him as Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

To them belong the patriarchs, and from them came the Christ

Rom 9:1 I am telling the truth in Christ (I am not lying!), for my conscience assures me in the Holy Spirit— 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed—cut off from Christ—for the sake of my people, my fellow countrymen, 4 who are Israelites. To them belong the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises. 5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from them, by human descent, came the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever! Amen.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The five verses read today—one sentence in Greek!—form the relatively approachable introduction to the complex arguments of Romans 9-11. At this point, Paul is really speaking from the heart, out of the depth of his own experience as a Christ-believing Jew.

CONTEXT IN THE COMMUNITY

As always, the key issue is the communion of both Jew and Gentile under the grace of Christ. Paul has relativised the significance of Israel's election. This is risky—has God changed his mind? Or even worse, has God rejected Israel, in favour of the Gentiles? (See Rom 11:28-29 below.) God's word of Israel was fulfilled in Jesus bringing God's election and grace to all. Will the Gentiles now think themselves somehow superior? Rom 11:13-24 is a blunt assault on such a false conclusion being drawn. In Rom 9:1-5, Paul expresses his deeply personal concern for the salvation of all of Israel.

KIND OF WRITING

Romans 9-11 combines at least four genres: *midrash*, chiasmic patterns, diatribe and rhetoric. The basic outline is:

9:1-5 Introduction (*exordium*)
9:6-11:32 Proofs (*probationes*)
11:33-36 Conclusion (*peroratio*)

The proofs go on to unfold in the following steps:

9:6-29 God's word has not failed
9:30-10:21 Israel's own righteousness
11:1-32 God has not rejected Israel

The lectionary—for good pastoral reasons—offers us just three excerpts from

this intricate writing:

Rom 9:1-5 (Sunday 19A),
Rom 11:13-15, 29-32 (Sunday 20A)
Roma 11:33-36 (Sunday 21A)

Even these approachable excerpts cannot be grasped without a reading of Romans 9-11 as a whole. The verses given for today constitute the introduction, an *exordium*, in the form of a lament.

RELATED PASSAGES

The train of thought thus far:

For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision something that is outward in the flesh, but *someone is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart by the Spirit* and not by the written code. (Rom 2:28-29)

Therefore what advantage does the Jew have, or what is the value of circumcision? *Actually, there are many advantages.* (Rom 3:1-2)

What then? Are we better off? *Certainly not*, for we have already charged that Jews and Greeks alike are all under sin (Rom 3:9)

It is not as though the word of God had failed. *For not all those who are descended from Israel are truly Israel, nor are all the children Abraham's true descendants*; rather "through Isaac will your descendants be counted." (Rom 9:6-7)

So I ask, God has not rejected his people, has he? Absolutely not! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. *God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew!* (Rom 11:1-2)

In regard to the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but in regard to election they are dearly loved for the sake of the fathers. *For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.* (Rom 11:28-29)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 1 Paul opens with a very insistent three-fold oath. Building on that, he affirms he is not lying and that even the Holy Spirit is a co-witness of his conscience. Co-witness picks up all the "co-" words from the preceding chapter 8.

Verse 2 This verse is a shock after the confidence, even exuberance, of chapter

8. While the word "sorrow" does recur in Paul, as one might expect chiefly in 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 2:1, 3, 7; 7:10; 9:7 Phil 2:27), "anguish" is unique to here. Unceasingly (as an adverb) occurs elsewhere only in association with prayer (Rom 1:9; 1 Thess 1:2; 2:13; 5:17). The hearer is left wondering what is coming next...

Verse 3 After the last line of Romans 8—*nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God*—this verse is intended to shock. The writing is emphatic (*I, Paul, myself*), even using the word "anathema", meaning in this context to be accursed or cut off. The one "set apart for the Gospel" (Rom 1:1) now wishes to be apart from Christ himself. Anathema can also mean an offering and he would like to offer himself for the sake of his fellow Jews, according to the flesh.

Verses 4-5a Paul lists *seven* privileges of Israel, each one significant. Adoption: that is by grace, not by nature. Cf. Rom 8:15. Glory: that is, to be revealed (5:2; 8:17, 18, 21, 30). Covenants, in the plural: Abraham is the key here. Law: Moses comes into play. Worship: see further Rom 1:9, 25; 9:4; 12:1. Promises: to Abraham fundamentally but also to and through the prophets. The patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, all important in Paul's rereading of Jewish identity in the light of Christ.

Verse 5b The crowning privilege is the Jewish descent of Jesus the Messiah. For Paul and for the Roman Christ-believing Jews, this is indeed the climax. There is much discussion over the punctuation of the last phrase: is God being blessed or is Jesus being blessed as God? On balance, it looks as if the NET above is correct and that Paul climaxes with a blessing of Jesus. The doxology is very Jewish and would have triggered an "amen" in the listeners.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Have you ever felt the desire that people you love could come to the grace of Christian faith? Who have you in mind?

2. Remember in gratitude the generations before you, from whom you have received the gift of faith intact.

PRAYER

Faithful God, we thank you for the faithfulness of generations before us and we ask your blessing that we too may be faithful in our time and place. To you be the glory, for ever and ever. Amen!

The Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence

1 Kgs 19:9 At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 *He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."*

1 Kgs 19:11 He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; 12 and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. 13 When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The lectionary reading—an engaging and enticing image—is actually quite short (19:9, 11-13), but to make sense of it all of 19:1-18. The entire scene may be entitled "The Renewal of Elijah's authority" or "The empowerment of Elijah." The core epiphany has always had a special appeal. Vv. 9b-10 added.

ORIGIN OF THE READING

This story cannot really be read without reference to the previous tale of the destruction of the priests of Baal in 1 Kings 18. It is likely that a later editor adjusted chapter 18 with various insertions to link it with chapters 17 and 19. As it stands now, the full account above serves a few purposes: (i) it contrasts where Elijah should have been (Palestine) and where he actually is (Horeb); it contrasts the despondency of Elijah with the extraordinary power of YHWH revealed paradoxically in the apparent powerlessness of the gentle breeze; (iii) it closes with a renewed and ambitious programme. The commentary will be confined to vv. 9-14, the lectionary excerpt.

KIND OF WRITING

At the centre of the reading is a theo-

phany, an experience of God's presence, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. This encounter now stands at the centre of a renewed prophetic call. As a renewed prophetic call, the full reading does have a shape, as follows:

Elijah returns to the place of original empowerment. (vv. 1-8)
God: revelation and challenge (vv.9-14)
Commission (vv. 15-18)

The lectionary selection comes from the middle section and has its own pattern:

9a: Arrival at the mountain of God
9b-12a: Initial potential presence
12b-14: Elijah emerges from the cave

RELATED PASSAGES

And the Lord continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen." (Exodus 33:21-23)

The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." (Exodus 34:6-7)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

The theophany to Elijah on Horeb (= Sinai) parallels that of Moses. Cf. the OT above.

Verse 9 Notice the precision of place ("that place", "there"). Elijah is hiding. This cave evokes the cleft in the rock which shield Moses from the glory of God (Ex 33:17-23).

Verse 10 Elijah summarises the story so far: he did his best, he was not received. On the contrary, his message was rejected and, as the last of "your" prophets, his life is under threat. Cf. *When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" He answered, "I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father's house, because you have forsaken the*

commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. (1 Kings 18:17-18) Notice the list: covenant, altars, prophets. V. 14 is a repeat for dramatic insistence. Elijah does exaggerate: see 1 Kings 17:24; 18:3-4.

Verse 11a The Lord directs the prophet out of his place of hiding.

Verses 11b-12a Familiar symbols of the presence of the Lord (see the OT background above): wind, earthquake, fire. Cf. Judg 5:4-5; Pss 18:7-15; 68:7-8; Hab 3:15.

Verse 12b The phrase used here has been variously translated:

...a soft murmuring sound. (JPS)...after the fire a still small voice. (KJV) After the fire, there was a soft whisper. (NET) ... after the fire, a light silent sound. (NABRE) And after the fire, a light murmuring sound. (NJB) ...and after the fire a faint murmuring sound. (REB) ... after the fire a sound of sheer silence. (NRSV)

The rather poetic NRSV is uncertain but is close to the Septuagint ("a vibrant silence"). The literal meaning of the Hebrew is "a gentle little breeze."

Verse 13 To make sense, we must imagine the Elijah has retreated into the cave and is now enticed out by the gentle movement of the air. Moses also covered his face (Ex 34:29-35).

Verse 14 This repeated message of despondency means that the prophet has no strength left except the strength that YHWH may give him.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. In the wider story, it is clear that Elijah is very downcast, dispirited and to some degree defeated. Perhaps now or in the past, you have found yourself in a similar situation. How helped? How was it? Looking back could you see God in it all?

2. Our reading appeals to us to recognise God not only in the drama of nature and life but all in inner stillness and surprising gentleness. Have you found this to be true in your own life?

PRAYER

Gentle and elusive God, you come to us in expected guises. Help us to be open to your surprising presence, that we may set aside our expectations, our agenda for the spiritual path, and may be drawn by you into our life with you. Amen.

THE LITURGY

1 Kings 19:9, 11-13; Psalm 85 (84); Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:22-33

READINGS 1 AND 3

Both readings offer an implied contrast between the terrifying power of nature and the gentleness of the appearance of the Lord.

THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM

The delightful Psalm 85 (84) fits very well the story of Elijah. *I will hear what the Lord God has to say, a voice that speaks of peace.* Appropriately, this is a prayer for revival, a tone matching that of the dispirited Elijah.

SUNDAY INTRODUCTIONS

First reading

1 Kings 19:9, 11-13

Recognising the presence of God is not always easy and he comes to us in unexpected ways, when we least expect it. In story, the prophet Elijah is very downcast and in need of God's help, not just to keep going but even to keep alive.

Second reading

Romans 9:1-5

Paul the theologian can sometimes seem almost superhuman in his faith and commitment. In this reading, we glimpse the human Paul. As Jew, he feels tremendous sadness that only a few of his fellow Jews came to recognise Jesus as the Messiah. It is not only felt but powerfully expressed.

Gospel

Matthew 14:22-33

Our gospel story is a kind of parable. At the time of writing, some felt that "being church" was too hard and that somehow God was no longer with them. Into that context of fear and despondency, Matthew offers us encouragement.

WEEKDAY INTRODUCTIONS

Monday 14 August

St Maximilian Kolbe, martyr

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

This reading may surprise people who are uncomfortable with the Old Testament. It teaches first of all the *love* of God, that is, the love we should have for

God. The second paragraph should speak to us today, conscious as we are of the stranger in our midst.

Matthew 17:22-27

This is a tricky Gospel. It seems to teach the two kingdoms, following Luther. Then, in an ironic twist, a miraculous catch supplies the tax!

Tuesday 15 August

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary



Apocalypse 11:19, 12:1-6, 10

This unusual reading is really about the motherhood of the church and the martyrdom of early Christians. By an accommodated interpretation, it is read for the feast.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

Our text is really a good example of Christian apocalyptic. One of the concerns of apocalyptic writings was the sequence of the end or when we will see the total victory over death. Paul believed in this, but knew it was not yet.

Luke 1:39-56

The prayer of Mary can still cause surprise because it is not about having a baby but about social reversal or revolution. We overhear in these words the prayer of the Christian *anawim* YHWH or the poor of the Lord.

Wednesday 16 August

St Stephen of Hungary

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

According to biblical tradition, Moses died within view of the promised land. Our reading describes his death and burial and gives a final, very moving tribute to the great leader.

Matthew 18:15-20

In this Gospel we are overhearing practices developed in the community of Matthew, most likely centred in Antioch. What to do with people who "stray"?

The procedure is in several stages, following common sensitivity and biblical precedent.

Thursday 17 August

Our Lady of Knock

Joshua 3:7-11, 13-17

Today we have the miraculous story of the entry into the Promised Land. It is essential to understand that the major events which accompanied the Exodus under Moses are echoed in a minor key in the Entry under Joshua. Psalm 114 (113) which follows is perfect.

Matthew 18:21-19:1

Two answers are given to the great question being asked in this gospel. The first answer is (apparently) numerical meaning no limit. In case that is not clear enough, the penetrating parable which follows makes it absolutely clear that forgiveness is a constant. Matthew puts it bluntly elsewhere: *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* (Matthew 6:14-15)

Friday 18 August

Joshua 24:1-13

Upon entry into the promised land, Joshua revisits the whole story of Israel from Abraham onwards. The telling is brief but pointed.

Matthew 19:3-12

What about divorce? It was practiced in early Judaism (as today) with an implicit permission in Deut 24:1. Jesus' response is a call to return to the original ideal of the creator in Gen 2:24.

Saturday 19 August

Joshua 24:14-29

A covenant renewal ceremony is recounted, something we regularly "do" in the Lord's Supper. As we hear, the commitment involved is scary!

Matthew 19:13-15

Our Gospel today illustrated two things. (1) The instinctive kindness of Jesus and (2) the childlike frame of mind we need to approach the saviour.