

Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: August 14th: Some Notes

With Barry away for the next two weeks, There is no pew sheet to circulate on line. I'll pick up some extra copies on Sunday.

- **1 Kings 19: 9-16:** The writer knows how to tell a story. We have just had the drama of the fire lighting competition between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Elijah won hands down, and had the prophets massacred. (No half measures withm Elijah.) But Ahab the King the tells his domineering wife Jezebel what E;ijah has done to her favourite group, and she vows vengeance. Elijah's moment of triumph is turned into fleeing for his life, with heavenly food to help him on his wilderness journey. If you want to be prissy, it is odd that the Lord asks him (twice) what he is doing at Horeb, since (a) the Lord has already asked him, and indeed directed him and protected him to this very place. But the writer believes in repetition... and of course stories were heard and remembered rather than read at this time. (I bet you remember this story.)
- Wind, earth, fire, and then "the sound of sheer silence" or the "still small voice", and God is heard in the silence. This bids to be one of the most memorable phrases in the Bible. Another up-time is promised, after the down-time. The terrified exile gets to anoint kings. You will remember that the end of the Eijah story is at least as exciting as what had gone before.
- Do we hear God in the noise or in the silence? Are we encouraged or discouraged by yet another "faithful remnant" story? I Elijah our favourite Prophet? Why Elijah at the Transfiguration?
- **Psalms 85: 8-13:** Two verses that it is hard to match, and maybe impossible to better. Maybe we could each have a go at putting them in our own words, as well as lookig at a couple of verses other than the NRSV.
- **Romans 10: 5-15:** Paul's sometimes rather tortuous assertions that it is faith not legalism that matters: Christ's sacrifice not our virtue, needs to be set side by side with James's blunt argument that shouting about what you believe is pointless if your life shows no signs of what you say you believe. Paul finishes with a passionate call to mission: every Christian a missionary: missionary in deed and in word. Here again, we can be out of tune with Paul. We have just been experiencing intense JW activity as they invite everyone to this weekend's Convention on the theme of keeping the faith. Paul's words seem to confirm the JW view that you need to believe (and act) to be saved. Our attitude tends to be that belief and action are good, but God isn't going to reject anyone, whatever their beliefs.. and maybe without being too fixated on their failings. JW's would find a Christian funeral for an agnostic very odd.
- **Matthew 14: 22-23:** Jesus doesn't often "show off", and some find this walking on water story a bit inconsistent with Jesus' humanity. After all, his first encounter with the devil was about the temptation to make dramatic (and rather pointless) shows of

divinity. Maybe focus onj the really splendid story of Peter trying to follow suit: good on him; and good on “Matthew” for reporting the courage and the failure.