

Reflection for Tuesday in Holy Week - 7 April 2020

Church of the Redeemer: 12:15PM Service of Daily Prayer

Abigail Ann Young

Today our readings all focus in on a single theme: God through his Servant Jesus opens a way for the nations, the Gentiles, which is most of us, to become part of God's covenant people. Yesterday in the first Servant Song we learned that the LORD is sending the Servant to judge the nations, but today in the second we learn much more when the LORD says to the Servant, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

How the LORD will carry this out is not said in Isaiah. Much more becomes clear when we read today's Gospel, again from John. There the Greeks — Greek-speaking Gentile God-fearers from the territory of the Jewish diaspora — approach Jesus through two of his Greek-speaking disciples because they are drawn to his teaching. Upon hearing this Jesus immediately declares that his hour has arrived, the hour in which he will be glorified. But he goes on to speak about that glorification in terms that few of us would associate with any kind of glory: he will die like a seed planted in the ground and he will be lifted up by Roman executioners, on a cross, from which he will call all people to himself.

How could one man by dying a horrible kind of death, by judicial murder, hope to bring all people to God? Yet however it happened, it worked. God vindicated the Servant's act of obedience in the Resurrection, in which the Servant was glorified as Messiah and Son.

That small group of “Greeks” were a prophetic sign for Jesus that the nations — all people — were aware of his teaching and seeking him. This was the sign he had been waiting for. Now he can truly fulfill his mission as Servant by being a light to the nations and calling all people to himself and through him to his Father. In keeping with that image of light, he goes on to exhort his hearers to walk while they have the light and to believe in the light. That is the way we become children of light.

Here and now in this time of COVID-19 we are also looking for a prophetic sign for our own circumstances. Where is God in Wuhan, or Italy, or Spain? Where is God in Bobcaygeon? The answer of course is that God is where God always is: God is with us. Our Christmas readings told us that the Messiah's name when he was born among us would be Emmanuel, that is, God with us.

God was with Jesus in his hour of unthinkable suffering and shame. God is also with us in our hour of suffering and illness. We know from these readings with their words of comfort and encouragement that God was with God's Servant in his sufferings, and God will be with us too, because God honours those who serve the Servant.

Those “Greeks” are also the second prophetic sign we witness this week — there will be more. The first was Mary of Bethany's anointing of Jesus on Monday with burial ointment. Each sign lights us on our own Way of the Cross as we follow Jesus to Friday afternoon and beyond. May we walk in the light as children of light and be drawn to Jesus as he is lifted up on a cross on Friday and from the grave on Sunday.