

Reflections on June 2013 Readings

There are so many wonderful stories in the Books of Kings! Here are some key characters and my favorite story connected with each:

- Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-12): God offers to fulfill Solomon's fondest wish. What a great answer Solomon gives, and what additional benefits God's includes! If only Solomon hadn't strayed from God in his later years... Let's ponder what we most want from God.
- Elijah (1 Kings 19:10-18): After Elijah's dramatic "battle" with the priests of Baal, he flees from Jezebel and is fed by angels. In this passage God speaks to him, not in the drama of the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in the gentle breeze. His still, small voice reminds Elijah that he is not alone and still has important work to do. We may not be able to run ahead of a chariot for miles as Elijah did, nor can we walk 40 days on a modest amount of food. But, like Elijah, we get discouraged, tired, and imagine things worse than they are. And like Elijah, we can rest assured that God is with us and can use us still.
- Elisha (2 Kings 2:1-14): Elisha refuses to separate from his mentor, Elijah, as Elijah's unusual "death" approaches. Elijah, ever the dramatist, sets the scene for his faithful assistant to get his fondest wish. Elisha thinks BIG and walks off with his wish granted: having double prophetic power. We can think big, too, and if our goal is to honor God, then we, too, will find fond wishes granted.
- Hezekiah, the best king of Judah: (2 Kings 20:1-7). Here, Hezekiah prays to be healed and God honors his prayer with 15 more years on earth. Unfortunately, as we read further in the chapter, we see that Hezekiah was far from perfect. He doesn't take God at his word, but asks for proof that God will heal him. Fortunately for him, God honors the request and the prophet Isaiah moves back the sun for Hezekiah. Unfortunately, however, Hezekiah gets a bit too proud and shows all his possessions (including weapons and treasures) to visiting Babylonians, and Isaiah then predicts the demise of Judah after Hezekiah's death. Hezekiah's humanity shows again when he takes the news rather lightly, thinking that at least he'd have peace and security during his own lifetime. Selfishness is the root of all evil and even the best of us battles it daily. Help us, Lord, to learn from Hezekiah's mistakes and seek to have a humble, serving heart.
- Josiah, the other great king of Judah (2 Kings 23:1-3): As a man of action, Josiah, cleared out all the shrines to false gods and eliminated the disgusting practices that made his people worse than the Amorites that had inhabited the land before them. Even the burning of babies had been common. In these verses we see how Josiah had the *Book of God's Law* read to the people and got them on board to follow God's commands. Then he also re-instituted the celebration of Passover, which hadn't been endorsed by any of Judah's former kings. But despite Josiah's good works, God was still angry about what King Manassah had tolerated and encouraged, and so Judah was taken over by the Babylonians as predicted to King Hezekiah. We, too, may see that our faithfulness is too late or not enough to make things right on a grand scale, yet (like Josiah) we are called to know and spread the Word and influence as many others as we can for God's glory. Actions (ours and others') have consequences; but with God's help our legacy will be a good one.

Some of my favorite verses from other parts of our June readings are:

Romans: 8:31-39; 10:9-15 12:1-2, 12:17-21; 14:10-13; 16:17-20

Psalms: 69:30-36; 71:17--19; 72 (Solomon's prayer for guidance)

Proverbs: 14:12, 16, 21, 29, 34; 15:1, 5; 16, 23, 29, 33; 16:7, 9, 16, 18, 20, 24-25, 31-32

My original Psalm: O Lord, how powerful and gracious are your ways; how encompassing your love.

Incline your ear to me this day. Forgive my sins; fill me with wisdom.

Yea, grant me strength and courage to do and be all that I can for your glory.