

Thoughts on the Daily Word

10th Week of Year. Monday 8th June. Readings: 1 Kings 17:1-6; Psalm 120; Matthew 5:1-12.

We move into the Old Covenant as our first reading, and then into the Gospel of Matthew until almost the end of Ordinary Time. The two readings are not aligned but are parallel. Reflecting on them allows us to ask, ‘what does God want to say to us today through his Word?’.

It is all about the prophetic word. Elijah the greatest Prophet after Moses is introduced and the Gospel gives us Jesus as in the line of Moses, fulfilling his mission. The Transfiguration brought all three together and proclaimed Jesus as their fulfilment. Prophets were more than mouthpieces for God, not just foretelling the future but making it happen. Their word was powerful, hence the need to silence and kill them. If they didn’t speak the word, then it wouldn’t happen was the expectation. Being a prophet was a business in a world without modern science or scientific analysis. Prophets gathered in groups or families and were paid to foretell or make the future happen. Much like ‘research’ groups today from various ideologies who try to influence governments, supposedly from ‘detached’ or ‘scientific’ viewpoints. The prophets of Baal play a big part in Elijah’s story and history of the northern kingdom of Israel, now split from the small kingdom of Judah. Israel is relatively big and wealthy at a fortunate time before the rise of the great Assyrian and Babylonian empires that would eventually destroy both kingdoms. The story of Elijah is pregnant for the future as his failure to achieve reform in Israel would lead to destruction and immense suffering for the Jewish people. The failure of Jesus would have the same effect, note his weeping over Jerusalem as he predicts its destruction. The Sermon on the Mount describes the suffering of the people in the light of the Cross. Blessings will flow from faithfulness, even in the light of apparent failure and suffering. It images Jesus as the prophetic fulfilment of the kingdom and those who image the beatitudes as the true prophets.