

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Jun 16th 2014

Today's Reading from 1Kings recounts the story of Naboth, a man from Jezreel, whose vineyard is next to the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria. Ahab decides that he wants to place his vegetable garden where the vineyard of Naboth is located. When Ahab asks to buy the land, Naboth refuses, saying he has heard the Lord tell him to keep his ancestral heritage.

Ahab becomes despondent about this and complains to his wife, Jezebel. Jezebel is from another land and does not ascribe to the accepted religion or practices. In support of her husband's desire for the land, Jezebel engineers a plot that gets Naboth killed and frees the land for Ahab to acquire.

Jezebel has a very bad reputation among Bible writers. I have always heard her referred to as among the very worst woman in the Bible. Calling a woman a "Jezebel," has been among the worst things one could say.

There may be more to say on this subject, however. Because she was not a believer, some scholars are of the opinion that there may be another side to the story and that she is a somewhat wrongly judged, at least the conclusions drawn are too harshly.

I do not care much about Jezebel and her reputation; however, I do care about the fact that I have heard about her for many years without giving a thought to there being another side to her story.

This leads to an obvious next question: What other stories have I believed without considering another version? This is a valid question for today: What "facts" do I hear or read without a thought to the existence of another side?

Today's news seems full of negative stories about all manner of things and people. Have I abdicated my responsibility to seek the truth behind a headline, for example, because I agree with the tone or the conclusion sits well with my already-formed opinion about an issue or a person?

The Gospel today recounts Jesus's sermon in opposition to the "eye for an eye" way of living. There is indeed much food for thought and prayer in these few sentences. "Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles." "...offer the other cheek..." "give your tunic as well..."

Could this be Jesus's way of pointing out that we are to avoid the obvious and dig deeper into the "reality" that is presented to us? I wonder how he would have assessed the role of Jezebel in the story of Israel? Would He have formed judgments without at least a brief consideration of "the benefit of the doubt"?

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