

## **Second Sunday After Pentecost, Proper 6**

**June 14, 2020**

Year A RCL

Exodus 19:2-8a; Psalm 100; Romans 5:1-8; Matthew 9:35-10:8

### **“Priestly Kingdom and a Holy Nation”**

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The lectionary presents for our reflection two texts that are foundational to what is our common vocation and mission as the people of God. The book of Exodus and the gospel of Matthew show the expectations that God has for the people He chose. These two biblical narratives point out the identity in which we, as Christians, are called to be and live our life.

The book of Exodus tells us how the people of Israel had lost their freedom and lived in slavery. The Israelites were oppressed and mistreated by the Egyptians who demanded they build the cities and work the fields. The Israelites knew God and they called upon Him in their anguish. The Lord God who made a covenant with Noah before the great flood (Gen 6:18), and also with Abraham, of whom He made a great nation (Gen 12 :1-3), hears the cry for help of the Israelites and answers their distress. (Ex 2:24-25).

God intervened by sending Moses to ask for the freedom of the people of Israel, however, Pharaoh seems indifferent and unresponsive from these demands.

Pharaoh's behavior demonstrates how those in positions of power, privilege and authority can exceed their limits and abuse others because they are blinded by their own ambitions and sense of superiority. It is useful to mention here, that any person who for any reason, circumstance, or situation, takes advantage and abuses physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, socially, etc., acts like Pharaoh, and must not be a Christian; since selfish love and pure human interest is a distortion of the genuine love for others which God demands of every human being.

The God of Israel, who is the Creator of all, shows Pharaoh and the Israelites, His mighty arm and capacity to intervene in human history through the ten plagues. The climax of the book of Exodus is the institution of the Passover and the deliverance of God's people in crossing the Red Sea to become a free people.

For our common history, the book of Exodus is a reminder of how God cares, how He listens to our cry for help, and is ever-willing to intervene when the many "Pharaohs" of history oppress or take advantage of God's people.

On Mount Sinai, God tells Moses to share with the Israelites, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." This was a reminder to prove that the past deeds of God worked to their favor when they pass from slavery into freedom.

“Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples.” God demands obedience and fidelity to the Covenant, and He promises to make of Israel a “treasured possession” among the nations and people of all the earth.

God affirms, “Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation”, although many interpreters have misunderstood and politicized this statement to geographic reductions. This declaration of God’s ownership over the whole creation and election of Israel shows the renewal of the Covenant. God’s story of love and care for the people of Israel is perpetuated and renewed. Since the whole earth is God’s property, the new free people of Israel have no limit to a specific territory or certain time, they are sent as missionaries and proclaimers of God’s mercy to every human race globally.

It is in the renewal of the covenant from the book of Exodus that we can understand Jesus’ actions in today’s gospel of Matthew, and we can explain our Christian vocation and mission: Jesus was “teaching in their synagogues... proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease.” His ministry is spiritual and physical, just as YHWH in the book of Exodus.

In this same way, God the Father hears the cry of the Israelites just as “When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed

and helpless.” Jesus has the same compassion that God has, and He knows that the harvest is plentiful and that workers are always needed to show the love God has for the whole world.

From Jesus’ ministry of teaching, proclaiming, and curing, we have the institution of the twelve disciples and the vocation of all the baptized. This text is not only for those in ordained ministry, it is a definition for the mission of the entire Church worldwide. All members of the Church universal are sent like Jesus was from the Father to offer liberation and healing of mind, body, and spirit. God’s treasured possession today is the Church, where all the believers strive to live righteous and faithful lives. Through our Baptism, we have access to Jesus’ priestly ministry, and we have been given the power to live our life of free will, knowing that we are the chosen people of God’s holy nation. Amen.