10.6.20

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Read: 1 Kings 18: 20-39

Very understandably, we all tend to prefer that 'histories' be written in a kindly light if concerned with ourselves personally or with those we love, whether family, friends, an institution or our country; we prefer that the embarrassing bits, where we behaved badly, be left out. Of course, we tend not to respond in the same way when it comes to life stories written about those of whom we are not so fond. Truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, tends to be a casualty in either case. [In writing our own personal histories, in our minds at least, this presents a problem when it comes to honest examinations of conscience.]

Today's very colourful and entertaining story from the 1st Book of the Kings takes an honest look at the wayward behaviour of King Ahab and the people of Israel. Elijah alone calls them to account, and with a dramatic demonstration of Baal's impotence and God's power he brings them back to repentant acknowledgement that "The Lord (God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel) is God, the Lord is God".

It is a characteristic of the Old Testament that this 'history' of the people called by God paints a 'warts and all' picture; I heard from a reliable source that there are 45 occasions in the Books of the Kings alone (I have not counted) where the disloyal, and often thoroughly bad, behaviour of God's chosen people is made plain. Humanly speaking one might wonder how come these unfortunate stories were not quietly set aside by the religious authorities along the way, but on looking more carefully we find that the recollection of the bad bits is always balanced by the reminder that God has a covenant with this people and is not going to renege on it, whatever the people get up to and however often they have to be forgiven on coming back.

So, the scriptures look full-on at the truth, the reality of our waywardness in our damaged human condition and the reality of the healing offered by our loving God, the lesson being that we do ourselves no service at all by living in fantasy and ducking the truth - for the evasion of reality provides no route map for finding God.