

**Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Year C      June 30, 2013**

**Theme: The Twelve Oxen of God**

The ancient story told us Elisha, the young prophet to be, was plowing his field with a massive team of twelve oxen.

His mentor Elijah came and placed the prophetic vestment over his shoulders designating Elisha as his successor.

But before he could take up this new role as a servant God, however, Elisha knew he must slaughter the oxen he had been plowing behind for they stood in the way of his service to God.

Here were their names and why they had to go.

The first two were always yoked as a pair, were the most massive oxen at the head of the team, and were the ones who led all the others.

Their names: **Guilt and Fear.**

These two beasts had such powerful pull in making a person feel unworthy and incapable of serving God.

**Guilt** over past mistakes and sins caused one to cower in self-imposed dungeons feeling like a prisoner despite God's confidence in calling.

**Fear** likewise brutalized a person beating him down and hiding him from a God he mistakenly thought must be feared and avoided, much less served.

Elisha knew this vicious oxen pair of **Guilt** and **Fear** must be slaughtered if he was to be a true servant of God.

Right behind Fear and Guilt in the team were a pair with more colorful names: "**Busy, Busy, Busy**" and "**Just Not Interested**".

"**Busy, Busy, Busy**" always had a million and one things for Elisha to do and just never had time for the things of the Lord; no time for service, no time for worship, no time for quiet reflection.

**"Just Not Interested"** was just not interested in the things of the Lord.

This ox kept telling Elisha:

- Bible stories did nothing for him;
- the teachings of Jesus were useless;
- Christian worship was a bore;
- and most churches drove him to drink with their petty concerns;
- he was sorry, but that's just how it was.

**"Busy, Busy, Busy"** and **"Just not Interested"** were oxen with mighty tough hides but if one was to be a servant of The Lord they would have to go down.

Next were two oxen with the clever names too: **Sally Science** and **Embarrassed Ernest**.

**Sally Science** tried to convince Elisha that if you served God you couldn't accept the findings of science and **Embarrassed Ernest** kept telling him it was just embarrassing in this day and age to have anybody think he even believed in God.

**Ernest and Sally** would have to go if Elisha was to serve the Lord.

Numbers seven and eight in the twelve mule team were a real pair: **Lazy Larry** and **Pretty Girl Ginger**.

**Lazy Larry** was just that: too lazy, too self-centered, to be God's servant and he told Elisha not to be bothered; serving God was too much work; let someone else do it.

And **Pretty Girl Ginger**, with gold rings in her ears and chains around her neck -- and an ox with gold ear ring and neck chains is quite a sight -- she was too focused on her material happiness to ever think about spiritual things.

She was forever badgering Elisha about all the fun things he could have and all he could do – just don't go serving God, what a waste that would be, she whined.

Then came a pair with the same name though they did not know it since they did not talk to one another or anyone else.

These two oxen were both known as **"I'm so into myself I don't care about anyone else."**

And they were both only concerned about themselves: their own pleasure, comfort, well-being, happiness.

Elisha knew God's servants obviously must be concerned about all of God's world and thus these two would have to go.

At the rear in Elisha's oxen team were puny, identical twin sisters named **"Ah, shucks!"** and **"Who, Me?"**.

These two just couldn't see themselves or anyone else as servants of God, and with false modesty were always begging off every request to get involved or help.

They told Elisha to just pretend to have no talent and no interest and you would never get picked for anything.

They were a real load always pulled along by the rest of the team and Elisha knew they would have to go to the slaughter before he could go about his work as God's servant.

The sacred story said that **"Elisha took the yoke of oxen, slaughtered them, using the plowing equipment for fuel to boiled their flesh, and gave it to his people to eat. Then Elisha left and followed Elijah as his attendant."**

Perhaps the ancient story can give some clues when certain oxen get in the way of our service to The Lord.