

## There Is No Other

It was the 1984 blockbuster hit, Ghostbusters, that immortalized the phrase, “Who you gonna call?” Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis, starred as three parapsychologists. Together, they opened a new business in New York City, specializing in catching ghosts. The company’s advertising jingle was:

If there's something strange in your neighborhood,

who you gonna call? Ghostbusters!

If there's something weird and it don't look good,

who you gonna call? Ghostbusters!

Of course, they were the only ghostbusting company anywhere, so if you had a scary ghost, “there was no other” to call. But actually, I am not here to talk about Ghostbusters today. I am, however, interested in a similar question: “If there’s something scary in your life today, who you ‘gonna call’, to help you?”

The people of Israel found themselves in such trouble. They had been defeated in war and sent into exile by the nation Babylon. After being exiled for years and having no control of their own nation, Israel wondered who they could call to help them with their trouble. Clearly, they could not call Ghostbusters!

But how about Cyrus? Cyrus was the Persian king who was in the process of conquering Babylon and all the lands that Babylon had conquered. Cyrus was a kinder, gentler conqueror, and in fact, when he was done conquering Babylon, he gave the people of Israel who were exiled, permission to go back home.

“If you’ve been conquered and you’re far from home, who you gonna’ call? How about Cyrus?” Well, according to our first reading today from Isaiah 45, that is wrong. In fact, the words of our reading tell us that it is God who gave Cyrus the strength, to subdue Babylon, so that Israel could go home again.

If there is one thing the people of Israel might have learned from being conquered by Babylon and sent into exile, is that “there is no other” they should call on for protection and help than the Lord. It is because they trusted themselves and called on other gods to face Babylon, that they got into trouble in the first place. In Isaiah, chapter 45, the Lord God says to Cyrus, to Israel, and to us too: “I call you by your name. I am the Lord, and there is no other. Besides me, there is no god. I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness. I make weal and create woe. I the Lord do all these things.”

Indeed, if you are an exiled Israel, or if you are living in our world today facing the coronavirus, natural disasters, social unrest, and a tense election season, who are you gonna call? Remember, “If there’s something scary in your life today, who you gonna call, to help you?” Well, there is no other to call on than the Lord.

We see a similar contrast in our Gospel reading today. Here it is not Cyrus and the Lord who are competing for people's loyalty, but it is Caesar, the emperor of the Roman Empire, and the Lord. Although, as Jesus teaches us in this reading from Matthew, it isn't or at least it shouldn't be a real competition.

In the story, the Pharisees send their own disciples and some of the Herodians to test Jesus. The test is simple, or so it seems. Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, the emperor? Jesus sees the trap they have set. He sees they are simply trying to get him in trouble, to get people to be against him.

You see, if he says "yes" pay the tax, then the Pharisees and many in Israel will be mad because they are tired of Roman occupation and taxes. If he says "no" don't pay the tax, then the Herodians will be mad because they are supporters of the Roman emperor, and will tell the emperor that Jesus is a traitor.

Jesus doesn't answer their question, nor fall for their trap. Instead, he says, "Show me the coin used to pay the tax." Surprisingly, they produce it. You see, this silver coin, called the Denarius, says, "Caesar is God" on it, so it is not allowed in the Temple. Ironically, they have one, and Jesus, of course, does not.

Anyway, Jesus asks, "Whose head is on this coin?" They correctly answer that it's Caesar's head. Then Jesus says, "If this coin belongs to Caesar, then give it back to Caesar, but also give everything belonging to God, back to God." They are amazed at his answer because they know everything belongs to God.

Here again is the question: "If there's something scary in your life today, who you gonna call, to help you?" Well, people of God, don't call Ghostbusters. Don't call Cyrus or Caesar or any worldly ruler, no matter how powerful. Instead, call on God. Call on the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides the Lord, there is no other.

The truth is that you and your life belong to God. You don't belong to Donald Trump or Joe Biden, any more than Israel belonged to Cyrus or Caesar. Even if you are a member of a political party, you don't even really belong to them. Right? You are followers of Jesus, and you belong first, always, and only, to the Lord.

If this is not clear in your life, it is clear in your baptism. There the Lord God said to you, "You are my son, you are my daughter, I love you, and with you I am well pleased." So, you are a child of God, full of God's Holy Spirit, and you belong to the Lord, who loves you, and who is in your life to help you.

I asked a young lady once in a confirmation interview, how faith in God was helping with a particular struggle that she was facing in her life. With tears in eyes, she said stated her faith, "I am never alone, and God has given me the strength I need." In other words, there was no other she called for help except the Lord.

Already at 15, this young lady knew that the only one she could call on for help with her trouble was God, the Lord Jesus Christ. We then talked about how God

calls others to help her too, friends and family, and maybe even someone she doesn't know yet, just like God called Cyrus to help Israel with their troubles. So, "If there's something scary in your life today, who you gonna call? Call Jesus." Call the Lord. There is no other. Whatever troubles you, Covid-19, the election, the failing health of a loved one, illness, upcoming surgery, sin, chemical dependency, abuse, depression or grief, call the Lord Jesus to help you. I believe the Lord will help you through it. The Lord will be with you and love you. The Lord will strengthen you and give you peace. The Lord will save you in every way. And, it is also true, the Lord will call others to be with you and help you too. The Lord will give you a Cyrus or two or three, to help you too. Yes, indeed, people of God, children of God, besides God, there is no other. So, who you gonna call?  
Amen.