

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Apr 5th 2014

In the Gospel reading today (verses 40 to 53), there is the discussion among the people about who Jesus is, where he comes from and whether he is the Prophet, or the Messiah. Furthermore, the Pharisees think that the ones who believe in Jesus and think he is the Messiah are the “crowds who do not know the law,” and the guards who have also been “deceived” by him. The Pharisees had their own image of God and they knew the law so well that their hearts were closed to Jesus’ revelation of God.

The theme of justice and righteousness present in the three readings today, takes me back to something that I find myself reflecting about fairly often. Each one of us makes, throughout our lives, an image of God. A God that fits in with our own, very human definition of the law and of justice, like Jeremiah, the Psalmist and the Pharisees. But Jesus reveals to us a God who is different, a God who reveals Godself to everyone but is often only heard by the poor (like the shepherds in Bethlehem), the sinners (prostitutes and tax collectors), the ignorant crowds, as in this case. It is almost as if this pseudo ignorance and the humbling realization of experiencing oneself as sinful and weak and in need of help, opens our hearts without a preconception of God. For those of us who often feel righteous and deserving of God’s salvation, it can be difficult to be open to a revelation of a God who is Love and loves all of God’s creatures. A revelation that often does not fit our preconceptions.

Jesus does not fulfill the characteristics of the Messiah the Pharisees were expecting. They were probably expecting a righteous and avenging Messiah, who would reveal the kind of God that Jeremiah and the psalmist thought they knew. But Jesus reveals a God who loves us all and his salvation is for all. But the catch is, salvation is not imposed on us, it is lovingly offered to us and we have to choose it and accept it. It is only after we experience our own poverty, our own sinfulness, our own ignorance that we will be free of preconceptions to accept God’s loving mercy and salvation. If we think we are righteous, then we do not need God and we will not “thirst” for salvation.

I think that the invitation today is to strip ourselves of all those preconceived ideas that we have about God and let ourselves be completely open to the God Jesus reveals: a God who, in Jesus, walks our same paths and tells us that God’s invitation is not contingent upon where we have been, or what we have done, or who we have been with. But the only important thing is to come to Jesus and to believe in him and he will give us his Spirit.

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