

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Mar 5th 2015

‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets,

neither will they be persuaded

if someone should rise from the dead.’”

These words strike me as among the saddest in all of scripture. People won’t be persuaded to cross the great chasm between the rich and the poor (a chasm that, let’s not kid ourselves, exists just as much in this world as Abraham says it does in the next) even if one were rise from the dead?

Then what hope is there to change our lives? What could convince us to, as Pope Francis keeps saying, come out of ourselves and go to the peripheries?

It’s at moments like this, with questions like these, that Jeremiah’s words make all the more sense:

More tortuous than all else is the human heart,

beyond remedy; who can understand it?

Not I.

Or, at least, there is only one thing that I understand: that the only thing that spans the chasms within our tortured human hearts is love. A generous and boundless love. A love we have not deserved. A love that teaches us to trust it not because we are faithful, but because it is.

Abraham is right, it is not the miraculous that spans such chasms, and it’s not guilt, or obligation, or fear.

Certainly there are miracles, but we do not cross chasms because we’ve been awed.

Certainly we are guilty of not living up to the love we’ve been given, but chasms are not crossed by those seeking to distract themselves from guilt.

Certainly we are obliged, but we do not cross chasms out of obligation.

And certainly we are afraid, but chasms are not crossed by those in flight.

It’s only love that sets a heart nearly beyond remedy alight.

A cocooning love that gives us space to change.

A cooling love that teaches us not to fear the heat, to reach out despite rejections.

To reach out because that is what lovers do, reach out to each other.

... that one is like a tree planted beside the waters

that stretches out its roots to the stream:

It fears not the heat when it comes,

its leaves stay green;

In the year of drought it shows no distress,

but still bears fruit.

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