

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Mar 4th 2016

Repent, says the Lord- the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

The third week of Lent may find us fasting, introspective, and pursuing self-conceived levels of atonement for our sins, and in supplication to our God. We realize through this process that we are poor, lowly, sinful creatures of a great and loving God. In the reading from Hosea, however, we find not a wrathful, angry God who is asking us to find ways to please or appease him, but rather, God is inviting us to return to Him. He freely offers his love.

Through many allusions to nature and the agrarian world of the times, Hosea tells us that God is a well- rooted tree that will provide shade and fragrance. We will be fed and comforted by his presence. The path of the Lord is straight and leads to His love. If we persist in our sin, we will stumble and falter on the path, but He will patiently be waiting when we arrive.

The Gospel according to Mark could not be a more obvious instruction on how one should walk the path that Hosea described in the first reading. The scribe may be any one of us. We need to ask, “which is the most important commandment; which one points the way most readily to salvation?” It is not a question that most of us would have the courage to answer on our own. We generally would not think that the commandments should be ranked. Jesus, however, did not hesitate. He singled out two commandments. The greatest is: “Love God with your whole heart, with your soul, with your mind, and with your strength.” If you do this, you will be filled with the love and power of the Lord. The second, “Love your neighbor as yourself”, is at the core of all Christianity. It is a straightforward litmus test to be applied to ourselves. Do we really believe in the love that God asks us to receive from Him and, in turn, show for others? Lent is a perfect time to consider this question as we stumble along the path to God and His eternal mercy.

Mark’s ending phrase, “...and no one dared to ask Him any more questions,” could be read, “No one needed to ask Him any more questions.” Jesus has told us what is most important. We do persist, however, in asking God questions. God is not only loving, but very patient with us. He will continue to answer our questions. Thank God!

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