

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Mar 11th 2016

Their wickedness blinded them, and they knew not the hidden counsels of God. (Wisdom 2:21-22)

In today's reading from Wisdom, we eavesdrop on a surly bunch. They are not troubled by their wicked deeds. They concede their corruption in a cynical way. After all, this is how the world runs. Get used to it. But one guy will not sit at their table. He does not play the game. Without fear, he calls them out. In his face they glimpse their diminished state. Such clear vision is offensive. He must be destroyed and all the rubbish about justice with him. Let his God save him.

Righteousness can afflict us all. We justify our lives by demonizing our opponents. A demon is easier to wrestle than this shifting self of mine. The Manichean mindset comes easily: in this corner is the good. Over there is the evil. And the battle ensues....But wait. Do we line up behind two forces: the pure and the stained? Everyone is tempted. Nearly everyone falls. Each saint is a sinner who finds his way home. God persists. Gradually these faulty notions are exposed and drop away. A more peaceful way calls. Real goodness with her crooked smile means more than the pure stuff.

A peaceful heart is not compliant. Jesus shows us this other way. Mainly we are guided by our fears. If I am being hunted, I lay low and stay hidden. Jesus is unruly. He is not hobbled by his fears or cringing before authority. Like Pope Francis speaking at the Mexican border, his words rattle the walls that divide us. God hears the cries of the poor. We too must listen. And act on what the heart comes to understand.

Scripture says we do not live on bread alone. What sustains us on this journey? We need companions. We ask for healing. We seek light to grasp the tricky troubles of our world. Pope Francis is sending 700 missionaries of mercy to bring comfort to the broken hearted. Here is the call.

Jeanne Schuler-Creighton University's Philosophy Department