

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jun 18th 2016

When I first read the passages from Chronicles and from Matthew they did not seem to belong together. Chronicles relates a wrathful Lord, one intent on providing the Jewish people with the lesson of the day – transgress the Lord’s commands and find yourselves smashed by invading Arameans.

Jesus, on the other hand, provides a most spiritual message – detach yourselves from material goods and wants, and be more trusting, as are the birds and the wildflowers.

But when I reflected on these passages later, it seemed to me that they are related after all. The princes of Judah engaged in conduct that demonstrated they had lost their focus, had taken an easier way, had mistaken the value of their gift from God and thus placed short-term expediency over long-term growth. They ceased to be other-directed and focused on the Lord, and were more self-directed and focused on self.

Jesus tells His listeners that they should focus on things that matter and not those that are distractions.

Jesus challenges His listeners to live more simply, less acquisitively, more spiritually. Jesus encourages us to be more faith-filled and less troubled by the things we are powerless to change.

In my part of the world this is an absolutely gorgeous time of year. We are fortunate to live in a semi-rural area, and the songbirds at dawn always bring a smile to my face and joyful gratitude to my heart. These late spring mornings remind me to slow down, to listen with a quiet heart, to hear the word of the Lord in my daily rhythms.

And yet, even in the midst of this wonderful time come reminders of our ultimate helplessness and thus dependency on God. In the midst of writing this reflection, we experienced a sudden violent thunderstorm that destroyed many of the trees that line the main road to our home, and with the trees the power lines. We also lost several huge trees in our yard. We were without power for 24 hours, and the comfortable rhythm of our lives changed immediately. We couldn’t cook, or watch television, or read (except with flashlights). We became, however briefly, reacquainted with candles and quick showers and feeling uncomfortable in our own home. I was reminded of how fortunate we are – our temporary lack of normal conveniences pales in comparison with the lives of many people for whom candles, or running water, or reliable energy, are luxuries.

Our discomfort reminded me what Jesus is telling us today, that the blessings we enjoy may also be our roadblocks – our attachments to people and things and material goods make it much harder to live life in harmony with God. What Jesus is calling us to do today, and what the people of Judah did not do, is to be in tune with God, to synchronize our actions with the life that God calls us to live, to detach ourselves from things that do not matter and to help God do the things that need to be done to bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth.

And so my prayer today is to find the comfort of God in the uncomfortable, to open my hands instead of grasping, and to seek the simple and sublime