

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Mar 2nd 2018

The readings for today focus on the darker side of human behavior yet it seemed to fit with our journey during Lent. The gospel on the first Sunday of Lent reminded us of the temptation of Jesus after 40 days in the desert. These readings certainly reveal the temptations we humans face particularly jealousy and greed. While it is discouraging to see how we are capable of such behavior, we know that Lent is a journey for us as Beloved sinners to move on beyond the temptations to redemption.

Joseph's story is one that we are familiar with – the young man who alienated his brothers with some of his arrogant behavior (they did not react well to his telling them in an earlier reading that he dreamed they would bow to him). We know of his brothers' anger and jealousy of the attention from their father, Israel, and of their plan to rid themselves of Joseph. Reuben seems to be the only one with any second thoughts and concern for his brother. This story has always amazed me that siblings could even consider such action. As I was “chewing” on this reading, I received my daily “Word of Encouragement” on two different days, one from Proverbs and one from Peter. They helped me to put this in perspective and understand the behavior from Joseph later in the story.

Hatred stirs up quarrels, but love makes up for all offenses - Proverbs 10:12

Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins
- 1 Peter 4:8

So, even as we read of this despicable behavior of the brothers, there is hope that love in the end will heal. Sometimes we have to “bow down” to our own human frailties, acknowledging them, embracing them, to be able to move beyond them and move closer to God. When we fail to even recognize that they exist we keep ourselves in the same place or perhaps moving even further away from God. It is Joseph's love that sees beyond his own faults and those of his brothers. It is God's unconditional and unwavering love that helps us to accept our own faults and move toward Him as we try to be better each day. The verse before the gospel says it all (my favorite John 3:16):

God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son;

so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.

The gospel reading is one that has always made me feel uneasy. What are these people thinking? They are just being asked to pay what they owe and yet they resist. Not only do they not pay what is right, they killed those asking, even the son. Perhaps we are not guilty of killing anyone but we (I do, for sure) ignore what should be done and the teachings we know to be the path for us. We know that the Son will be sacrificed for us.

These words from Sidewalk Prophets' song, You Love Me Anyway, came to mind as I read the gospel.

I am the thorn in your crown

But You love me anyway

I am the sweat from Your brow

But You love me anyway

I am the nail in Your wrist

But You love me anyway

I am Judas' kiss

But You love me anyway-

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