

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Mar 11th 2013

Today's first reading, from Isaiah, speaks about things being made new – the Lord is going to create new heavens and a new earth. We can read this in a literal sense in that the world and the condition of creation is literally going to be thrown away and something completely new and different put in its place. We can also read it in the sense that the world that we live in right now is going to be made new, or perhaps renewed or rejuvenated.

In either case, I think the key question is whether or not we really believe it. Do we really believe that God can make our lives and our world new again? I ask this question because, if we really take an honest look, there are plenty of things all around us that can make us feel hopeless, cynical, and despondent.

Our world is facing threats from climate uncertainty, unequal wealth distribution, and the political unrest that comes with overabundance and overuse at one end of the social spectrum and fearful scarcity and lack of access at the other.

Our country is deeply divided on many issues, from same sex marriage to abortion and contraception; from the national deficit to Medicare and Social Security. Oftentimes, we can't even find a way to talk to each other about these important issues.

Our own lives each contain dark places, whether it's personal habits that are bad for our health and well being, or attitudes that are harmful to our relationships and families.

Yet today's Gospel reminds us of the importance of having faith, faith that things can indeed be made new. Jesus rebukes the royal official in this story for asking that his son be healed. We get the impression that Jesus thinks this man is asking for his son to be healed in order that he might believe. I think the opposite might be true here, though. He didn't demand that his son be healed so that he might have faith. He approached Jesus because he had faith. The cure was not the cause of his faith, but the consequence.

Similarly, we must not wait for the above-mentioned problems and challenges that confront us to

disappear before we truly believe that things can be made new. Instead, we are invited to move through our Lenten journey with faith, knowing that there is new life at the end of the tunnel. Faith is the precondition that allows us to embrace the challenges in our lives and in our world, the truly Lenten struggles that we experience each and every day. In fact, approaching the world with the hope and the belief that things can indeed be made new just might be a prerequisite to living a Christian life in our world. This is God's promise to us and the consequence of believing it makes all the difference in how we view the world and the possibility that things can be made new and that God works through us to do just that.

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