

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

How do you feel when you hear someone say that they are never going to forgive the person who has hurt them or their family? We hear it too often don't we. Whenever I hear people say that I feel very sad for them. Because I think that forgiveness is not just for the person who does wrong. Forgiveness is also for the forgiver. Unless we forgive then we cannot be healed; we can never move on. I say that as someone ignorant of the kind of pain that those who say they will never forgive are experiencing. I've never had somebody close to me murdered. I've never had someone close to me killed by a drunk driver. I've never had anybody abused in my family as have some of those people who say that they'll never forgive.

Today we've heard a story about David who was being pursued by king Saul. Saul had set out to kill David. But David was able to go to Saul's tent in the middle of the night unobserved and he had the opportunity to take the spear that was beside him and to kill king Saul. But he chose not to do that. David had learned something about compassion and forgiveness David himself had needed to be forgiven by God for the way that he murdered Bathsheba's husband and took Bathsheba as his own wife. Because he experienced God's forgiveness, he was able to act as a person who was forgiving and compassionate toward king Saul. Some of the psalms

that are attributed to David pick up that spirit of forgiveness, that spirit of mercy that David had learned because David came to know the name of God. He came to know God to be a God of mercy and compassion, a God of tenderness and love, and he sought to imitate that God

In our gospel today Jesus calls us to imitate God in the way in which we act toward one another. He calls us to be people who do not hold on to hurt but offer forgiveness to those who have hurt us. He tells us that if we love those who love us, then what thanks can we expect. No. He says if we only do good to those who do good to us what thanks can we expect. Sinners do that much. But he says instead love your enemies and do good and lend without any hope of return. Then you'll have a great reward and you'll be sons and daughters of the Most High for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

Jesus then calls us to be compassionate as our Father is compassionate. Jesus himself learned that lesson. We know that he faced a very cruel death and was put to death by those who hated him. And yet before he died on the cross, he was able to pray, "Father forgive them. They do not know what they're doing."

When we think about all of this, in our weakness we say to God, “I cannot do this. I'm not able to forgive in the way in which Jesus forgave.” And we're right. Only God can forgive and today we need to renew that desire to not just learn from Jesus but to draw from Jesus that spirit of forgiveness that we need to be able to forgive others.

In a beautiful way St. Paul talks about this today when he talks about Jesus as being the new Adam. ‘Adam’ mean ‘man’, and the story of the fall of humankind in the Book of Genesis is not so much a story of an event long ago as the story of every human temptation and sin. The obedience of Jesus the second Adam undoes the disobedience of the First Adam. Paul tells us that while Adam gave us a soul Jesus gives us a spirit. Jesus gives us the spirit that we need to be able to be like God. He gives the Spirit to be God’s sons and daughters. And it is with that spirit that we are able to reach out beyond ourselves and to be the people who do what Jesus calls us to do.

There is a great reward to this way of living. “Do not judge and you'll not be judged yourselves; do not condemn and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon and you will be pardoned; give, and there will be gifts for you, a full measure pressed down shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap

because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given.”

How often have we experienced the truth of those words? How often have we done something that we thought was very small, and yet we were rewarded in a measure that was much greater than the effort that we made? How often have we discovered that even a very small act of kindness can create something very beautiful? May we have the joy of discovering this again in the days ahead.