

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Sep 12th 2013

All the readings today are about love. “Love, Love, Love. Love is all you need.” St. Paul tells us that we need to love others as Christ loved us. We need to forgive them and love them. The best way to follow Christ is to love one another. Jesus loved us and forgave us and died for us. To follow him, we need to love each other completely. If we love each other and treat each other decently, act out of love, everything will work out. And wouldn’t this world be a better place if everyone followed this advice?

Every day, all around us we see people not loving each other. The news is full of political unrest, people killing each other, people stealing, cheating. Divorce is rampant, families are breaking apart. It often seems that people can really be very selfish. They focus on their own desires to the detriment of everyone else. I’ve been reading a lot lately about people who get so much into exercising that they leave their spouses and children so they have more time to work out and race. I just read about some people who killed a family, convinced that God wanted them eliminated for their lack of faith. That doesn’t sound like the God we’re reading about today. If everyone treated each other with love, there would be no war, no murder, no violence, no theft: no crime.

The psalm tells us that everything that breathes should praise the Lord. Everyone and everything should love God and love all God’s creation. The best way to love God is to love God’s creation, and that includes other people. It also includes animals and the earth itself. If people acted out of love toward all creation, there might be more vegetarians (like me) and there would certainly be fewer polluters. Loving God and praising God definitely includes loving and protecting all God’s creation.

This all seems pretty inclusive, but in the Gospel Jesus takes it a step farther. What could be a step farther than loving all creation? Really loving all creation. Loving even the seemingly unlovable. Loving people who are not merely seemingly unlovable, but people who are actively not loving us. Jesus says it’s easy enough to love those who love us. It’s harder to love those who don’t. But that’s more of a challenge, and that’s really loving the way Christ loved. It’s not enough to just love those who love us. It’s not even enough to love those who don’t love us. We also need to love those who hate us and are actively trying to harm us. If people try to steal from us, we should give to them freely. What we give freely cannot be stolen. If others try to harm us physically or take our lives, we should give that too. Again, what is given cannot be stolen. If these other people were acting out of love, they could not act like this, but even if they do (and we see around us that people do) we should not stoop to their level. We should react out of love even when we are not treated lovingly. If our reward is not on earth, it will be in heaven. If we love and forgive others, regardless of how they treat us, we will be loved and forgiven. “And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make.”

Tami Whitney