

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Feb 1st 2014

Today's scripture readings are not the most comforting found in the Bible. However, some real lessons can be drawn from them. In Second Samuel, God sends Nathan to expose David's sin. And David's child becomes terminally ill. The psalmist proclaims, "Create a clean heart in me, O God". In Mark, Jesus is asleep in the stern of the boat when a violent storm arises. The disciples, fearing for their lives, awaken Christ who chastises them, "Do you not yet have faith"?

2 Samuel is what jumps out at me today. I can identify with David. Not that I'm a murderer or adulterer or that I've lost a child. However, David is quick to recognize someone else's sin. He seems blind to his own sin. I can sure identify with that. I admire David in that he confesses his sin, repents and is forgiven. And they all live happily ever after. Ah, not so. David's child falls ill and will die. The thought of losing a child makes me shudder. I cannot imagine the pain. I'm sure it's one of those times where I would bargain with God. I'll remain faithful as long as you don't take my child. It would be one of those lines in the sand. I will worship you, Lord, as long as you don't cross this line. Funny that we think we can bargain with God.

2013 was a hard year for me. I could not wait for 2014. In 2013 I lost my dad, a good friend, my dog, my cat and my job. I thought I was done writing reflections (which is an incredible gift to me). I know, I know, it sounds like a country and western song. I wondered, why is God allowing this? This cannot possibly be part of God's plan. Is Satan trying to drag me down? What good can possibly come from all this loss? I could feel myself slipping into fear, anger and bitterness. I believe I was into the second refrain of "Poor, Poor, Pitiful Me" when my Nathan arrived. My Nathan was my wife. She pointed out how blessed we were and all the gifts we have; all the wonderful things of 2013. And then she said those three little words that mean so much. Get a job! Or was it I love you? Anyway, I chose faith, hope and love over fear, anger and bitterness and here I am, writing a reflection. God's plan is sure confusing.

I'm reading a book by Max Lucado entitled (appropriately) You'll Get Through This. One of the questions in the book is, "Is God good even when life is not?" The answer is yes. One of the lessons 2013 taught me is how short and fragile the gift of life is. Too short to be wasted in fear and worry.

I think God places people in our lives for a purpose. Nathan was placed in David's life for a reason, and I am married to Deb for a reason. I'm guessing I will never understand why some of the things that happened in 2013 happened (at least I won't in this life). I think of the times I took my children as toddlers to the doctor's office. They are smiling and trusting until the doctor gives them a shot. Then smiles turn to looks of pain, shock and dismay. They give you that look of, I thought you loved me, I thought you would protect me, why are you letting the doctor do that? It's a look that honestly hurts me as a father. I wonder if God feels that way?

My prayer today is for those of us who are struggling with hard times and questions about God's plan.
That we can trust God and remain faithful to Him.

Daniel Patrick O'Reilly