

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Apr 2nd 2014

Today's scripture readings today speak to me about mercy and anger. In Isaiah, God says, "I will never forget you". The psalmist proclaims, "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. The Lord is good to all and compassionate toward all his works". In John, Jesus tells the people that whoever hears his word and believes in the one who sent him has eternal life. The people want to kill Jesus because he calls God his father and makes himself equal to God.

It's funny what makes people mad. Scripture tells us God will never forget us. That God is slow to anger and merciful. Jesus tells us that he came to earth so that we could have eternal life. And we get mad. I often get frustrated with myself in that, here I have Jesus as my model, we're in the middle of Lent, where I'm supposed to be working on my relationship with Christ, and I get mad at people.

I was at the grocery store the other day waiting to check out. I had the checkout lady who it must have been her first day on the job (of course). She was struggling and obviously nervous and I'm sure she was aware of my impatience. Then the person behind me bumped me with their cart. It may have been an accident, but, being the cool, calm, collected, mature adult Christian male that I am, I turned and told them they had better move back. Of course I was shouting at some poor, little, old lady. The checkout lady, immediately blurted out how sorry she was and how this was all her fault. Good grief. I, the supposed ambassador for Christ, had just wrecked the day for two of God's children. I apologized and told both of them I was sorry and left the store wondering what the heck was wrong with me. Even in Lent we are sometimes overwhelmed by the push and hurry of the world around us. Being a disciple of Christ was not easy 2000 years ago and it is not easy today. It's easy to think following Christ is impossible and we can lose hope.

I'm reading a book, *God Is Closer than You Think* by John Ortberg. In it is an image, *The Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo, in the Sistine Chapel. Everyone is familiar with this beautiful painting, but I had never before noticed the relationship between God and Adam. Adam does not look very hopeful. He's looking at God, but his effort to reach God looks pretty weak. God, on the other hand, is straining forward to reach Adam. God's desire for Adam is evident. What a wonderful image. We may feel unworthy or like a failure, yet God's desire for us is unwavering.

My prayer in this Lenten season is for those of us who feel that we are failing in our relationship with God. That we would know God's love for us can overcome anything, including our shortcomings.

Daniel Patrick O'Reilly