

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Apr 14th 2014

Today we start one of the most important weeks in our church. A week that is full of suffering and pain yet equally full of promises and hope. This is a week where we will see the cross, as a symbol of great suffering, be then transformed to a symbol of hope, of trust, and, above all, of love. On the surface, the readings for today conveyed to me two major themes: acknowledging the Lord as our Savior and recognizing what is important in the here and now. The second theme is especially significant given what is to transpire during this week.

The first reading from Isaiah sets the stage and prepares us for the coming of Christ while the responsorial psalm clarifies the Lord as our Savior and our need to let go of our fears – we are safe in the arms of God:

The LORD is my light and my salvation;

whom should I fear?

The LORD is my life's refuge;

of whom should I be afraid?

The story of Mary anointing the feet of Jesus is one that has always intrigued me. Mary “gets it” – she understands the value of Christ in her life right there and then. We have other readings where Mary sits at his feet and allows herself to be completely present to Jesus and soaks in his words and the gift of him. She does not allow herself to be distracted or try to multi-task around him. Here as she pours her precious perfume on his feet, she conveys that she recognizes the value of Christ and that honoring him is more important than riches or anything else. Judas, of course, has some ulterior motives and is quick to chastise.

Whenever I read this passage, I have to reflect upon whether I am keeping “first things, first.” Do I allow the busyness of the world to overshadow what is most valuable to me and my salvation? Of course, there are commitments to be filled and work to be done (especially if we wish to be paid!). I am constantly challenged to keep my priorities in mind and to balance my life. It is so easy for me to be all consumed with the demands of work and my profession. I struggle at times in the choices I make and need to consciously remind myself of what is most important in the grand scheme of life.

Another theme from these readings that “haunted” me and caused me to have some angst in writing is that of forgiveness. While that theme may seem hidden, the subtlety was there for me and kept causing me to come back to it and face it. It is critical to me where I am at this point in my life and maybe why it kept echoing that I must address it. All of what is to come this week and what Christ spoke of relates to forgiveness. God’s love for us is so great that he forgives us all our sins and symbolizes that love and forgiveness by giving us his only Son. It is the underlying point of all of this – Love and Forgiveness. I am well aware (reminded every time I pray the Our Father) that I must forgive if I am to expect forgiveness (and salvation). It seems for me that I can more easily forgive those who directly hurt me than those who hurt the ones I love. It is painful for me to see poor treatment of my loved ones – I feel enraged and indignant, I want to shake whoever is hurting them and tell them to stop. Yet, I know in my heart of hearts, I must pray for the person and forgive what has transpired and continues to transpire. I can only hope that God gives me that Grace to forgive and let go. It has been a real stress of late. Yet the fact remains that many times (too many times) as I turn on my car radio, the song that plays is **Forgiveness by Matthew West**. The words haunt me and remind me that forgiveness is the bottom line and if I want the rest that I must find a way to forgive and release myself. I will leave you with some of the words of this song (I skipped some verses because of space).

It’s the hardest thing to give away

And the last thing on your mind today

It always goes to those that don’t deserve

It’s the opposite of how you feel

When the pain they caused is just too real

It takes everything you have just to say the word...

Forgiveness, Forgiveness . . .

Show me how to love the unlovable

Show me how to reach the unreachable

Help me now to do the impossible

Forgiveness, Forgiveness

Help me now to do the impossible

Forgiveness

It'll clear the bitterness away

It can even set a prisoner free

There is no end to what it's power can do

So, let it go and be amazed

By what you see through eyes of grace

The prisoner that it really frees is you

Forgiveness, Forgiveness

Forgiveness, Forgiveness . . .

I want to finally set it free

So show me how to see what Your mercy sees

Help me now to give what You gave to me

Forgiveness, Forgiveness

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