

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jul 28th 2015

Today's reading emphasis both forgiveness and consequences. The first reading from Exodus tells of the conversations between Moses and God while in the Gospel, Jesus reveals the meaning of the sower and the seeds and weeds.

The passage from Exodus is very powerful as it tells of conversations between Moses and God. It is interesting that it refers to the people praying at their tents when Moses goes into the Tent. Yet during the forty days and nights of Moses' vigil they turned away and sought idols. I've often been confused by the following passage:

“The LORD, the LORD, a merciful and gracious God,
slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity,
continuing his kindness for a thousand generations,
and forgiving wickedness and crime and sin;
yet not declaring the guilty guiltless,
but punishing children and grandchildren
to the third and fourth generation for their fathers' wickedness!”

It seems contradictory to me to be kind and merciful yet to punish four generations for the wickedness of those who came before them. Then I am reminded about Pope John Paul II and his handling of the assassination attempt on his life in 1981. While he was critically injured, upon recovery he did visit and forgive the assassin, Agca. Agca was still to serve a life sentence – so the forgiveness did not mean that there were not consequences to the behavior. I hold on to this example to try and understand the concept of being kind and forgiving but also expecting those who sin to be held accountable.

The responsorial psalm reiterates the concept of being kind and merciful and the forgiveness. I love the idea of how far the east is from the west in understanding the span of forgiveness that is afforded to us. Loving arms were extended on a cross for us to absolve us from all these previous sins. By giving us Jesus as our Savior, God, indeed, has shown us mercy and salvation. We have only to embrace it and it is ours.

The parable in the gospel further explains this idea of those who are to be forgiven and welcomed into loving arms. The weeds are to be gathered and burned. I think about the weeds in my garden that became so overgrown while I was away. I spent hours pulling them and throwing them away. One thought that occurred to me during this tedious work is that not all the weeds were ugly just inappropriately placed. Oh, some were sticky and picked at my skin as I attempted to pull at their roots. But in reality, some were “volunteers” from some of my beautiful flowers. Still this had to be removed from their current site – it reminded me that some seeds of the Evil One can be very inviting and seemingly harmless. It is essential to stay focused on the beauty of the garden and those seeds that are related to the rightful sower.

Nancy Shirley-Creighton University's College of Nursing