

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Aug 7th 2016

“Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.” Luke 12:48

I recently attended a “Living Every Day with Passion & Purpose” event with Matthew Kelly, Catholic speaker and author. The above passage resonated with something he said that evening. Kelly told the audience about a clergy who had many people leave the church when they were encouraged to pray for their enemies. During the time when Jesus lived over 2,000 years ago, it could be argued that the popular culture lived by the concept of reciprocal justice or “an eye for an eye.” Jesus taught counter-culturally and turned reciprocal justice upside down. Jesus challenged his followers during the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:43-45 - The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once said that "An eye for an eye is a law that makes the whole world blind."

There has been an overwhelming amount of tragic violence these past days and a seemingly ever growing amount of hatred expressed towards those responsible for acts of violence. When we live with hatred and unforgiveness we live with something that is worse than any beating that could be given to the servant who was beating the other servants. Hatred and unforgiveness eats away at us from the inside. Also, in the U.S., the death penalty remains a hot debated topic in current culture. We need to re-evaluate the death penalty according to the consistency of Jesus’ message. Jesus lived and died at the hands of capital punishment. His response was to ask for forgiveness because they did not know what they were doing. This brings us back to today’s reading found in Luke 12:48: “...more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.” As Christians, we have been entrusted with more and more is demanded from us.

It certainly isn’t easy and we can’t do it by ourselves. We can follow Abraham’s example and by faith, sojourn in the promised land. The promised land where hatred and unforgiveness will be gone. The challenge I have made for myself is the next time I catch myself cursing under my breath towards someone that has irked me (like cut me off in traffic) is to reverse the curse and ask the Holy Spirit to help me pray for the person.

Jan Schnack-Creighton University's College of Nursing