

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Sep 22nd 2016

Well, there is plenty of pessimism in today's first reading, that's for sure. We are basically told that life is drudgery, endless toil that wears us down until we pass away and are replaced by the new generation that follows us. Just like the sun rises and sets, we are told that we human beings are set to some kind of auto-pilot or somebody pressed the repeat button and we just keep listening to the same song over and over again.

It seems to me that this is a choice, though. I just returned from a retreat in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and I've done this same retreat for five years in a row now. The basic pieces of the retreat have remained the same through the years, but each one has also been different. That's because I'm different, and I'm with different people. Even though the sun rises and sets every day that we're in the Hills, each one has different color, a different feeling based on the weather, and sometimes it's completely hidden by clouds or fog. Each one is different if I let it be different and approach it with the mindset that this is indeed something new.

I think we get the same invitation in the Gospel today. Maybe it's not surprising how confused people were about Jesus, thinking he was simply something old returning from the past. In a culture that saw God as jealous and vengeful, I'm sure it would have been hard to know how to think about this new phenomenon that turned all of that upside down. It really was, and still is, something new! We are asked and challenged to live each day as a new opportunity to share and to live the compassion, love, humility, and forgiveness that Jesus lived each and every day. This calls us beyond the "same old, same old" where we focus on ourselves, do not worry about others, and close ourselves off to the pain and struggles of those around us. Living that way does make it seem like there is nothing new under the sun and each day is a struggle and a battle. But consciously living each day as something new, looking for the beauty and the sacredness that surrounds us, allows us to say, "See, this is new!" and actually mean it and feel it.

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