

## Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Feb 19th 2017

If I am attentive, I am given numerous opportunities each day to judge poorly, act selfishly, explode in anger, or make short-sighted decisions. If I'm observant, I notice the same for others. There is no shortage of opportunities to choose poorly. At times it is quite obvious that decisions are motivated by greed or fear. Racism, ageism and all those other attitudes of intolerance may be subtle or blatant. Sometimes folks plan their revenge within hearing distance. Whether in our own homes or across the globe, we have many opportunities each day to forget who we are. We have many excuses for "forgetting" who God is and our knowledge of how God acts in our world!

Each of today's readings, in one way or another, asks us to remember who we are, to whom we belong, how to act as brothers and sisters and not to use others' behavior as an excuse for our own! Though written long ago for a people half way across the world, these speak to us today, right now.

Leviticus: You are holy, because I, your God, am holy.... Others may need correction, but don't incur sin because of them.

Psalms 103: The Lord is kind and merciful... slow to anger and abounding in kindness.

Corinthians: You are the temple of God... the Spirit of God dwells in you... the wisdom of the world is foolishness in the eyes of God...

Matthew: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of God....be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus' directive is not to be passive nor to endure exploitation or abuse, but rather to reject the temptation to retaliate or exact revenge. Jesus invites us to remember who we are – that we are human beings, dependent on Grace to be "whole," "holy" and "blameless" (scripture scholars give us these words as a better translation of "perfect"). Be merciful as God is merciful.

Today I learned about the ancient Hindu religious festival, Holi, or the "festival of colors." As the arrival of spring and the victory of good over evil are celebrated, participants sprinkle and spray each other with colored water, paint or powder. For one day, everyone looks the same – a rainbow of colors. For one day, we remember that we are one family.

Ponder: Rainer Maria Rilke wrote, "Perhaps everything terrible is in its deepest being something helpless that wants help from us." Who has shown us kindness and mercy? To whom have I been kind and merciful today? There is the kingdom of God.

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