

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jan 12th 2018

“Time flies,” even in the liturgical year. We have only thirty-three days until Valentine’s Day, so we can save any Christmas candy left over for treating our beloved friends. Ah, but alas, Valentine’s Day this year is also Ash Wednesday. My advice is to eat the candy now and so have less to give up during the “Joyful Season of Lent.”

Talking about “giving up,” in our First Reading for today’s Sacred Liturgy, from the Book of 1 Samuel, the people of Israel come asking God to give them a king so that they will have someone to tell them what they are to do. They couldn’t give up their idea of what would be good for them. Now God has told them already how they are to live and conduct themselves in the Torah. Samuel takes their request to God, Who tells Samuel to give them what they want.

The rest of what we hear is about their getting what they have asked for and “It ain’t going to be good for them.” As it is often quoted, “Be careful about what you ask for.” Ultimately God gives them what will eventually bring them back to what is good for them.

The Gospel for today provokes some good reflections. We are listening these days to the early curing-stories in Mark’s Gospel. There are many little curings which are statements affirming that Jesus is the Saving Message and Messenger.

Jesus is doing good things on all seven days of the week and doing them to and with all kinds of persons in need. The crowds find Him fascinating and attractive. Today He is in a house and there is such a large crowd that four men are carrying a fifth man, who is paralyzed and cannot reach the touching-Jesus. Their faith raises their hope and their need raises their eyes to the roof of the house. They lift their friend up to and down through the hole they have made and plop the fellow in front of Jesus and the crowd inside.

Jesus sees their faith-in-action and cures the fellow who gets up and leaves as a response to the healing and missioning. What Jesus says is that the man can go, because his sins are forgiven. This begins the rising-action of this story. The scribes ask a good question which very words are a Good-News proclamation, “Who can forgive sins, but God?” During the time of Jesus, any physical disability was seen as a result of sin. So Jesus turns things around. To forgive is the healing work. Physical miracles bespeak the wonderful miracle which is and Who is the person of God, Whose touch is the “Face of God”. The man got what he asked for and it was good. Jesus is the Whom we ask for and He is good for us.

Those who are healed by Jesus know they have not seen anything like Him or this in their lives. They often worship Him. Allow me a bold statement here. Sin is over rated! Why do I say this? We tend to allow Jesus to forgive us only after we have gotten over our personal pride and have had time to recover from the shock of not being our holy-self.

We can be so disappointed in ourselves that we emphasize the sin as an insult to our image of ourselves. Jesus does not deal with a sin or the sin, but restores the sick or injured person to the person they are in His eyes. Jesus tells this character to get up, get out and keep going. The man has risen in two senses. He rises from a physical condition and he rises to be a man who receives and remembers

who he really is. Sin is a temporary statement of who we say we are. Jesus is a permanent Statement about who He says we are.

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