

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Jan 29th 2018**

Can you imagine a more unlovable human being than the man described in today's Gospel reading? Here was a person, full of sin, full of Satan, homeless, scurrying through the mountains, streets and graveyards naked. He is screaming, crazy mad, abusing himself with stones. Blood, both fresh and dried, covers his body. Imagine his hair matted, his body full of the stench of foul odors. How would we respond to this man?

Mark describes a list of responses to this unattractive figure. Some tried to tame him, others tried to change his habits and reform him. Failing that, he was chained and ultimately shunned, ignored and marginalized.

What is God calling us to do? How should we respond to those who are unlovable? Jesus saw beyond what this man was --to what he could be. After this man experienced the love of Christ, he wanted to be close to Jesus. He was drawn to serve the Kingdom of God. We the ambassadors of Christ and are called to allow Christ's Spirit of love, hope and compassion to work through us – with the power of the Holy Spirit – to love the unlovable. This doesn't come easily or naturally. It can only happen when we tap into the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. It is natural to love people who are lovable-who are like us. It is a work of God in us to love the unlovable-those who are different for any number of reasons.

Christ can change anybody. Christ's love can revolutionize anybody's life, but His love must first be shared and then received. And so, the obvious lesson for us is to in faith, "become comfortable being uncomfortable" and seek to manifest the love of Christ through us to those who the world says are unworthy.

There is however, another lesson for us in this Gospel, one that is much subtler. How do we view God in our own lives as sinners? Do we see God as the chief judge – harsh and strict in response to our sin – or as our Father who loves us unconditionally? Do we accept and embrace that Christ can change not only the unlovable man of the Gospel –but even us? When we sin, do we see ourselves as unlovable and thus cause a rift between God's unconditional love for us?

Let's remind ourselves that God is always there waiting for us – and even in our sin we only should knock and the door shall be opened.

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