

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Apr 12th 2019

Let's enhance our communication

This passage has very interesting beginning and ending, when juxtaposed: “The Jews fetched stones to stone him ... and many of them believed in him.”

They were indeed angry with Jesus, really angry! Ready with stones to send him to the grave!! Just two previous chapters (chapter 8) of this Gospel, Jesus saved a woman from being stoned to death, and now the same action is directed towards him!!! Obviously, from Jesus' brief speech, they had shallow knowledge of him. He therefore draws their attention to what John the evangelist calls 'signs' – his works. They quickly responded that it was not because of his good works. How much did they care to really know him?

The point and big question is: how much time does each of us invest in trying to understand the other? What kind of patience does each of us exercise in attempting to enter into the other's cultural background, familial upbringing, previously informed influences from peer groups and social clubs, etc?

The second part of the Gospel passage surely took place at a different setting, but certainly among his fellow Jews. This group around River Jordan clearly had deeper knowledge of Jesus hence appreciated him graciously: Many people who came to him said, 'John gave no signs, but all he said about this man was true'; and many of them believed in him." What a message and challenge to us!

Communication is the key to deeper knowledge of one another. And it is clearly two-directional – namely, the listener understands deeply by entering the worldview of the speaker! This is the all important role of empathy, and it demands active listening which is a product of patience. We do not need to always be in a hurry to act, to relate to the other. Instead, we need to patiently listen to the expressed and unexpressed languages of the other. It takes time, but it pays dearly; it builds, nurtures and replenishes interpersonal relationships - because each of us longs to be correctly understood!

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