

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Feb 7th 2013

As the Letter to the Hebrews nears its end, the author again places before us a series of contrasts: Mount Sinai/Mount Zion, the covenant with Moses/the covenant through Jesus. These contrasts culminate in the contrast between the blood of Abel and the blood of Jesus. Both of them, the author says, “speak.” But of what do they speak?

According to the Book of Genesis, the blood of Abel was the first human blood shed on the earth. God says to Cain, “Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the soil!” Cain becomes a “marked man,” fearful of vengeance, at a distance from God and others. The blood of Jesus, by contrast, speaks of “mercy.” We hear the “eloquence” of Jesus’ shed blood as he hangs upon the cross and calls out, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” The blood of Jesus reconciles and heals.

Can we “hear” the blood of Jesus speak? Can we pause long enough to let “mercy” be the word which enters our hearts? In the face of our own personal sins and failings, do we hear Jesus speak a word of “mercy?” Or do others’ words, words of condemnation, drown out that voice? In the face of others’ sins and failings do we desire to speak “mercy” to them? Or do words of vengeance come to our minds and hearts?

Jesus, help us “ponder your mercy.”

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