



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Deacon Terry Ellerman
April 7, 2019 Fifth Sunday in Lent

Reading I Exodus 37:12-14

Psalm 130:1-8

Reading II Romans 8:8-11

Gospel John 8:1-11

Homily

We are continuing with our Lenten journey, and one week from today is Psalm Sunday and two weeks from today is Easter. So we ask ourselves, how are we doing? How are we doing in becoming closer to God? Are we closer to one another? Are we more forgiving? Are we more compassionate? Are we more merciful?

This is a lot to think about but the good thing about Lent is that we are not there yet, and it is never too late to start and it is never too late to do better. What I want us to do this morning is to think about an event that occurred 2,000 years ago during the time of Christ. We are there with Jesus with the Scribes and Pharisees, and we are in that crowd and we have a big stone in our hand. We call out, "This woman has been caught in adultery. The law says we need to stone her." What are we going to do? We ask Jesus, "What do we need to do?" Jesus says nothing but writes in the sand. We press him for an answer and ask again, "What do we need to do?" Finally he says, "Any of you without sin, cast the first stone."

Everyone left.

You know to stone someone in that day was for adultery, blasphemy, and for a number of things. To stone someone you picked up a rock and threw it at that person until he or she was unconscious. Then you continued throwing at that person until he or she was dead. You say, "That is barbaric." And it is but it still exists in some countries.

Today none of us throw stones literally, but do we throw stones? Do we throw stones with our tongues? Do we throw stones with our actions? Do we accuse people and think the worst instead of the best? Isn't that throwing stones? We live in a world not a whole lot different than the time of Christ in that we are not always nice to one another. In the First Reading from the Book of Isaiah, the man is getting old and he is says, "There are good things that are going to happen. I am here to help you but you also have to help yourself, you also need to help one another and you need to make the world a better place."

Then in the Reading from Paul to the Philippians he says to them, “You know, I gave up everything to follow Christ and to do the good things and the right things. I thought about this and asked, ‘What does Christ want me to do?’ ”

How are you and I living our lives? Are we merciful? Are we forgiving? Are we loving? And the answer is: Sometimes. And probably most of the time. But we are all guilty. If we were at a location holding the rock in our hands and Jesus says to us , “Those without sin—throw the first stone.” I would guess, I would hope, that we would all leave that place—because we are all sinful people.

But we are also called to repent. We are called to make a difference. And we should ask ourselves, “What do I need to do differently to have a closer relationship with God? And what do I need to do differently to be closer to one another?” Especially our family, especially the ones we work with even though it may be difficult. But that is what we are called to do.

There is a story that took place a long time ago. There was a woman who went to Napoleon and sought from him the pardon of her young and only son who was in the French army. The emperor said that the mistake he had made was serious enough that the pardon could not be given. The mother said to him, “I do not ask for justice. I plead for mercy.”

“But,” said the emperor, “He does not deserve mercy.”

“Sir,” cried the mother, “It would not be mercy if he deserved it. And mercy is all I ask.”

“Well, then,” said the emperor, “I will have mercy.” And her son was saved.

Yes, Jesus too, gives us mercy and we do not deserve it. As we look and concentrate on Lent, we know that we make mistakes, but we also know we have a God who so loves us that, in fact , he sent his son to die on the cross. He did this, not because we deserve it, but because he loves us.

So this week—let’s look at ourselves. What do we need to do differently to be more compassionate, more loving and ultimately—more merciful?

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