



Some reflections inspired by online copyrighted commentaries and homilies

September 13, 2020

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In every parable I hear it causes me to question its meaning for our lives today. The question I would like to pose from today's gospel parable is why is it possible that a servant who has just been forgiven a huge debt by his master goes out and demands payment from a fellow servant for a much smaller amount? What makes it possible that someone who has experienced such profound mercy and blessings cannot extend even an ounce of kindness to their brother or sister? Is this first servant just mean and heartless? Has he forgotten so quickly the generosity that was extended to him?

I think the servant who was forgiven the huge debt is neither heartless nor forgetful. He is shady and insincere. I think we should see this first servant as a manipulator who uses people and circumstances for his own benefit. (sounds familiar)? If we listen to his words to his master, "Be patient with me and I will pay you back in full," should not be seen as a sincere promise but rather as a ploy to play upon his master's emotions. The servant recognizes that his master is generous and compassionate, so he is betting that he can use his master's goodness for his own advantage. When his master, indeed, forgives him his entire debt, this devious servant does not feel thankfulness, only success, He has as the elders would say, "pulled the wool over his masters eyes". That's why when he goes out and finds a servant who owes him money, there is no thought of generosity or mercy. His fellow servant is merely pawn in the game that the first servant is always playing for his own profit.

Now, when we see this first servant from this vantage point, he becomes an example to us of the people in our lives and in our world who are without moral compass, people who will do or say anything to get what they want, people whose lives are not about helping or serving but about winning, and all the people and circumstances they encounter are merely means to that end. When we see the first servant as a manipulator, the other servants become the heroes of the parable. They are the ones who recognize the first servant's insincerity and manipulation, and they do something about it. They go and report the first servant's cruelty to their master, and that servant's game playing comes to an end.

When we view today's parable in this way, it becomes a reminder to us of our responsibility to work against what is wrong in our world. To be a follower of Jesus, we need to do more than say our prayers and be kind to others. We need to recognize the presence of injustice, insincerity and manipulation around us and do something to expose it. The Black Lives Matter movement, that we see working in today's society in principle is trying in my opinion, working towards this goal. Evil continues to manifest in societies when we do nothing. The first servant was counting on the fear and reserve of the second servant. Some of our leaders in our nation today rely on this same coy behavior and attitude of the people, to manipulate the populous.

Jesus' parable today challenges us to recognize the presence of injustice, prejudice, and manipulation in the world around us and to do something to change society. So, from the Gospel message today, you might want to reflect on your own questions. Do you know someone in your family or among your friends who habitually finds humor in degrading people because of their race or religion? Do you know a bully who continually demeans others because of their sexual orientation, economic condition, religious beliefs or the way that they look? If so, today's parable tells us that it is not time to remain silent, but to ask: "What can we say or do to make it clear that such behavior is unacceptable and wrong?" Are you aware of someone in public office or running for public office who is without moral compass, only interested in winning votes to be elected (hint, hint)? If so, today's parable tells us that Now! is not the time to do Nothing, but ask ourselves, "What can we do to stand up and say or do something to expose such deception?" How can we be true to the Gospel message?

The parable in today's gospel warns us not to mislead ourselves. There are persons around us who are more than willing to use prejudice, fear, and ignorance to serve their own self-interests. That is why we, as followers of Jesus, must speak out and act on behalf of justice, mercy, and the common good for all persons.