

4th Lent I& II 3-10-2005
Exodus 32: 7-14; John 5: 31-47

JUSTICE/MERCY

When was the last time you fronted off God, let Him know that he got it all wrong. It seems pretty impertinent for the creature to be lecturing the creator. But here we have Moses doing exactly that.

Well, it's clear from holy inspired scripture that we can do just that. It is clear that God can handle it and that God even responds to it.

How do we reconcile that with the understanding of God as all-knowing and all powerful. Well sometimes we can't resolve all of those ambivalent understandings of God. But that may be the key: our understandings.

It is clear to Moses (at least at first) what his understanding is of God. Yahweh was the personal god of the Children of Abraham. Should the Children reject Yahweh, perfect justice would call for their doom. It is here that Moses close intimacy with God causes him to cry out for their mercy. That the people are God's children, no matter what and pleas for mercy. So whose understanding is being converted here, Moses' or God's?

We have the same problem of discerning justice and mercy issues today. I found a simple equation. If I have been wronged, I think justice is in perfect order. If I have wronged, I think a little mercy would be appropriate.

Now if I have to take this past my narcissistic self, how do I discern. I offer you what Jesus said in John: "these works that I perform testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. Moreover, the Father who sent me has testified on my behalf."

The clue to discernment is Jesus. The father's work rings true in Jesus' works. When I try to discern when justice or mercy or both are called for, I look to the stories of how Jesus encountered individual people in all those varied situations in life. Look to Jesus.