

REFLECTION FOR 25th SUNDAY YEAR B

Wisdom 2:12,17-20 James 3:16-4: Mark 9:30-37

Sometimes, we resent people because they are doing the wrong thing. Sometimes, we resent people simply because they are doing the right thing!

The Scripture readings which are offered for our reflection today describe people who face the anger and resentment of others, precisely because they are living their lives the way that God calls all of us to do! They are doing it right – and that upsets the people around them.

The 1st reading from the Book of Wisdom speaks about a ‘righteous man’ – and the Gospel of Mark speaks of Jesus, the Son of Man. In both of these readings, people want to get rid of the righteous man, and they want to get rid of Jesus, not because Jesus or the righteous man are doing something wrong, but because the righteous Man and Jesus are living Godly lives..... and the presence of a godly person reveals the lack of godliness in everyone else around them.

In our 1st reading from the Book of Wisdom, we hear about the threats that are whispered about a man whose name we do not know. What we DO know is that he is ‘righteous’ – that is, he is listening to God’s wisdom, learning God’s ways, living as God calls us to do. You might think such a person might be praised. But, the people in this passage are tired of him. They want to get rid of him. And why? Because he listened to God. He prays. He is dedicated to God’s truth....and that shakes people up.

When a holy person is in your midst, you either are inspired and try to follow their example, or you seek to get rid of them, so you don’t have to change!

The people in this passage from the Book of Wisdom decided that enough was enough – so they plot to destroy the righteous one. What do they say about this righteous man? They say:

- + Let us lie in wait for the righteous man because he is inconvenient to us
- + He calls himself a child of the Lord.
- + The very sight of him is a burden to us, because his manner of life is unlike that of others
- + He avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy, and boasts that God is his Father.

Jesus faces similar resistance, and a similar threat. He says it plainly to his disciples in today’s Gospel reading: “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.”

Why would people want to kill Jesus? Jesus has done good deeds. He has done good works. Jesus healing the sick, feeding the hungry, forgiving sinners, bringing sinful people back to God and loving people to goodness.

Some people rejoice. And some people can't stand it! Perhaps they can't stand Jesus because, as long as He is in their midst, it becomes clear that they are not being faithful to God. So, they have a choice – either change their lives to become more Christ-like, or crucify him.

So, two questions for our Christian reflection today:

The First is this - have you ever found yourself in the position of the Righteous Man, or Jesus? Have you ever become 'the enemy' simply for doing what is right, saying what is true, following God's will as you understand it?

As human beings, we often do the wrong things without intending to do so – we mess up, make mistakes, and tick people off. Sometimes we let our anger or our fear get the best of us. We sin. And have to allow the Holy Spirit to show us that truth and show us the way to conversion.

But then there are times when people are upset with us because we are, in fact, doing what is right. It happens in families, in relationships, in churches, in life. It happened to the Righteous Man and to Jesus. Sometimes, we become the target, not because we are wrong, but because we are doing the Godly thing.

In those moments when you are paying the price for doing what is right, remember – you are in very good company. The prophets paid that price. The saints paid that price. The saviour paid that price. The world is changed for the better when people are willing to pay the price for simply doing what is right, and true, and Christ-like.

Many of us prefer to call ourselves Christians so long as it cost us nothing.

If you are looking for an easy life don't be a Christian, don't be a priest, don't get married. They are not easy vocations, but it is a magnificent vocation to love and care for others and be a channel of God's blessing.

We Christians are called to just keep living the truth and speak the truth of Christ in love. Always the truth. Always in love.

Because truth without love becomes a brutal weapon. Love without truth becomes a sentimental lie.

And the second question: how do you handle the truth-tellers and the truth-doers in your own life?

Sometimes we are the ones paying the price for doing what is right. But let's be honest, at other times, aren't we are the ones saying, "How can I get these people out of my life? They are driving me crazy with all of their holiness, godliness and truth-telling."

Saints are not easy to live with. Prophets are not fun to have in your family or at work. There are parents, and children, and pastors, and spouses, who will tick us off with great regularity, simply because their good example offers us a stark choice: do I chase these good people away, or do I let their good example call me to deeper conversion, renewal and holiness?

Who is the truth-teller in your life right now – the one you'd love to get rid of – the one you know is an uncomfortable gift from God? Who is that person, who is forcing you to acknowledge the ways that jealousy, envy and greed are devouring your life? Who is the truth-teller who is forcing you to do the uncomfortable work of admitting your selfishness, your possessiveness, your sin? Who is making you finally deal with your failure to forgive, your unwillingness to be generous to those in need and live a life of integrity?

The disciples in today's gospel reading were arguing which of them was the greatest. This shows they that they were only interested in themselves, their own self-interest.

So, James in our 2nd reading, admonishes us not to let selfish ambitions destroy our relationships, families, and communities.

Our ambitions, priorities, selfish interest, our reputations, infighting, gossips, indifference, hatred, and jealousy can get in the way of our authentic service to God's people. At the heart of discipleship is not to receive honour, power, and status in our society. At the heart of discipleship is selfless service.

Jesus tells us 'If anyone wants to be first, he/she must make himself/herself last of all and servant of all.'

Jesus teaches us what makes one great in the eyes of God: We need to practice humility in thoughts, words and actions, offer selfless service and to expect nothing in return.

St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) puts it like this: *"Be the living expression of God's kindness: kindness in your service, kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile and kindness in your warm greeting."*

May we always thirst for God and seek to live in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives.

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