

A Bible Bullet (aimed at the heart)

Fourth Sunday of Lent, Cycle C

Joshua 5:9, 10-12; 2Cor. 5:17-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Have you noticed how often in today's movies and television stories the focus is on revenge? If you have seen the current movie, *Edge of Darkness*, you have experienced two hours of hoping the bad guy gets his "just desserts" at the hands of Mel Gibson. The bad guy is very bad, so for a while, all seems justifiable. After all, he had it coming, right?

Notice that the reading in 2 Corinthians speaks about a fresh start.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now all is new...God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself....For our sakes God made him who did not know sin, to be sin, so that in him we might become the very holiness of God.

The perfect Lamb of God, through the willing sacrifice of his life, reconciled the world to God. He was not just a sacrificed Passover Lamb saving the people who would then go on to face 40 years in the wilderness. He took what we owed and paid the price himself.

The only possible response for a believer is to reconcile with God and others when such a high price was paid for his/her ransom. We are a new creation. We prove that to the world when we offer to others the forgiveness that was freely given to us. If we do not, we leave our spirits in the limits of the Old Testament: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. To be a new creation we must choose to be like the Lamb.

This may be the biggest challenge to living like a Christian. We yearn for justice because God is Justice. As St. Augustine prayed, "O God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." But, we seek to be instruments of justice, in ways that we can witness, as we make others pay for their faults. Yet, we are often choosing to ignore our own faults as we administer justice our way.

True justice, God's way, is an exercise in delayed gratification for the believer. The way this is accomplished is known through the gospel reading of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Although the title reflects on the adventure and lesson

learned by the son, perhaps the greatest lesson of all is encapsulated in verse 20:

While he (the son) was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was deeply moved. He (the father) ran out to meet him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him.

There is no knowledge on the father's part about the reason for his son's return. We know he has repented, but the father does not. The only knowledge the father has is the depth of his own love for his son who has been away. **Even if the son inflicts more sorrow with this return, the father's love must be expressed--unconditionally.**

Such is God's love for us. His embrace encircles us before the moment of the priest's words of absolution in Reconciliation. This is the ideal love that we must strive to model. This is divine love, possible only through grace, God's sharing of his life with us. This is the love that makes us new creations.

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