

Human Transgression vs. God's Compassion

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The readings of this Sunday sum-up the mystery of our salvation. The human heart follows the selfish instinct of physical desire and indulges in a temporary pleasure, even if this is contrary to the whisper of our conscience to do what is right and noble. The Writer of the Book of Genesis, struggling to understand the presence of evil in the world, puts it squarely at the feet of the human person as the primary driver of wicked ways. “When the Lord saw how great was man’s wickedness on earth, and how no desire that his heart conceived was ever anything but evil, he regretted that he had made man on earth, and his heart was grieved” (Gen. 6: 5-6). Consequently, God wanted to start with a clean slate by wiping out the human race from the face of the earth. Even in such determination, God still has compassion for the human person, the pinnacle of his creation. The first reading warns us the consequence of wickedness yet assures us of God’s compassion; waiting patiently to mend our evil ways and inclinations.

In the second reading, St. Paul explains to us God’s “compassion and mercy” revealed in Jesus’ incarnation, ministry, passion and death in the most humiliating way. His love for us being unconditional, God sends His only Son to bring us back to His embrace. St. Paul invites us to have the attitude of Christ by “being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing.” What does having the same attitude and mind of Jesus Christ means? It is about self-emptying to become a source of blessing for others, witnessing our faith through love and concern for each other.

The Christian paradox of our time is that many of us claiming to be following the letter of the Scriptures. However, in the words of St. Paul, we lack the “participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy.” The scriptures ask us, “each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those others.” The paradox cannot be any clearer in our polarized society divided by human ideologies yet weaponizing our faith to justify our respective intransigency. This shows that we do not have “the attitude of Christ.”

Finally, the Gospel reading sums up that when our words and actions are incongruent, it is clear we are not doing the will of the Father, who sent us His only Son to “mend our wicked ways.” Our self-centeredness, our self-righteousness and our ideological idols are in the way. It is easy to say yes, but not easy to take concrete action responding to the demands of our faith. We use every excuse not to live by the command of love. The love of God is radical and unconditional, inviting us to respond to his love and come to Him hand in hand with our brothers and sisters. Regardless of their behavior or living style, no human person is out of God’s boundary of love and compassion. If God humbled himself to be one of us, who are we to think we are better than our fellow person to judge and exclude them because of conventional constructed attributes. The demand of our faith clearly is, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).