

Prodigal Son

Chicago March 7, 2010

A person was lost in the middle of the jungle, after two days he found another man and shouted, "Man! I am so happy to find you so you can show me the way." The man replied, "Don't be so happy, I've been lost for 10 days..."

Two brothers were lost in today's Gospel, one who went to a far away country and one who was living with his father but was lost, because his living was in darkness and had no compassion and no mercy toward his brother. Both sons had sinned, one publicly and one behind closed doors and both needed God's compassion and forgiveness.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is a very inspiring parable. It has been called "the greatest short story in the world" (Barclay). Sometimes they refer to it as "The gospel within the Gospel."

The parable is not about either one of the sons. It is about the father. The Father who loves us not because of what we are but because of Who He is. It is all about the divine mercy.

Our heavenly Father comes out to welcome each of us to his party. I believe the most beautiful line in the parable is what the father says to the elder son, "*all I have is yours.*" God the Father is saying to each one of us, "*All I have is yours.*"

We really don't have an idea of how great God's mercy is. It is so difficult for us - who often find it so difficult to forgive - to understand that God can forgive us so easily and so totally.

Ever since God created man in His image, man has been trying to re-create God in his image. We want God to act like us instead of the opposite. We want to judge, he wants to forgive, we want to exclude certain people because of their colors, nationalities or history, but He wants to include everyone in his kingdom and in his party. He says to all of humanity, "*All I have is yours...*"

But in order to be his true children, we must act like Him and reflect his image in us. We must love as he loved and forgive as he forgave.

** Forgiveness is what really distinguishes Christianity from other religions. Others might believe in the same God we believe in, but they do not believe in total forgiveness. Only Christ died for his people. While he was being nailed to the cross he prayed saying: "**Father, forgive them; for they know not what they are doing!**" (Luke 23:34).

Forgiveness is not something that is easy to do. It is not easy to forgive someone who has hurt you, someone who has abused you or distorted your reputation. But Jesus commands us to forgive, even our enemies. Unless you come to the point of forgiving totally you are not free and you are still a captive of your human weakness. Of course you cannot forgive by your own power; you need the grace of the Holy Spirit to do it. Jesus is very clear about forgiveness. Listen to what he says to you and me, "**if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)**

I wonder how many of us will skip going to communion today because our brothers or sisters have something against us! Or worst, we have something against them. I wonder how many of us will be hypocrites and approach the Altar and receive Christ while our hearts are filthy with grudges, hatred and sins.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, there is no peace without forgiveness and there is no freedom without total forgiveness. Our children today need parents who show them every day how to forgive and how to love even their enemies, let alone their family members, relatives and friends. People usually have a little argument and they turn it into a war and refuse to forgive and they hold grudges from one year to another and from one generation to another. This is not Christian at all, rather it is anti-Christian. Jesus says to us, you must forgive "**Not seven times, but seventy times seven...**" that is four hundred ninety times. Jesus did not say that just to fill in the blanks, he was serious and we need to take his words seriously if we need to be forgiven. He said in another place, "**If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not**

*forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.
(Matthew 6:14-15)”*

Jesus is telling us not to hold anger and resentment in our hearts. Not to look for vengeance and payback. Instead he tells us, Treat one another the way God treats you. Be forgiving the way you want God to forgive you. **“Forgive us AS we forgive those who trespass against us,”** we pray.

Forgiveness truly is the sweetest revenge. It can turn an enemy into a friend. It can free a heart from the chains of anger, hatred, and pain. It can bring you back to oneness with God in everything you think, feel, and do. Pray every morning, **"Lord help me to forgive, help me to give, and help me to love..."**

The Church proclaims this parable to us in the midst of this Lent, not to entertain us, but to hold up a mirror to us. In the prodigal son we can see ourselves who turn away sometimes from God. We can see ourselves like the older son who is living in his own darkness. But as I said earlier, this parable is about the Father and his unconditional love. The Father has no faults and that's who we should imitate and act like.

Today is the 21st day of our Lenten journey. There are still 21 more days for Holy Week. For this remainder period let us try to act like the Father and to stay away from the action of both sons and above all to forgive and forgive and forgive for that what love and Christianity is all about. And yes, we can all hear our Heavenly Father say to each one of us, “Son or daughter, all I have is yours.”

Our Easter celebration will have meaning as much as we forgive and as much as we love. Let us listen to the greatest commandment that Jesus gave us, **“As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”**
(John 13:34)

Let us be true Christians and true disciples of Christ and love and forgive each others. Amen

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