

Fifth Sunday in Lent- “Accepting Life on God’s Terms”

Gospel

John 12:20-33

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. ²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say--"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name."

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

In today’ gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that the time had come for the Son of Man to be glorified, which was another way of saying that the time had come for him to leave them and die.

In the middle of the passage, Jesus struggles with the reality of his impending death and has a little dialogue with himself. (Read vs 27) He says, "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say--"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name."

Jesus' heart is troubled, He knows that he is heading to his death and he doesn't want to go there. He was fully human and he was afraid. He wanted to be saved by his father, he probably wanted to turn around and run away. He wanted to get out of it, if there was a way out.

Remember, right before his death in the garden of Gethsemene, Jesus says to his father, "Father, if it be your will, take this cup of suffering, from me." But he knew deep down that his father had brought him to this point in his life for a reason. That God had a bigger plan for him. So, instead of running or pleading for God to take the pain away, he leaned into it, he accepted his situation and trusted that God would bring something good out of what seemed like a very bad situation.

When our hearts are troubled, and we are facing a bad or scary situation in our lives, it's natural to go into one of 3 reactions. Fight, flight or freeze.

If we choose to Fight – feel anger, try to change or control the situation or the person that is causing us to be troubled. This involves resistance in our minds and our emotions toward what is happening in our lives.

If we choose Flight – we usually feel fear, we feel overwhelmed. The problem feels too big and we feel like hiding or running away, we may plead with God to take away the pain.

Freezing is also a reaction to a troubling situation. This also involves fear, but you are so scared, that you can't even run. You are immobilized, stuck, unable to move or make a decision. It's the scared rabbit or deer in the headlights response. This reaction can move into depression and anxiety.

It's natural to experience one or even all of these reactions to a challenging situation, but if you stay stuck in them for long, it can be unhelpful and make it difficult to respond to your situation in a healthy way.

There is another way to respond to a troubling situation that is often harder than any of the others, and that is acceptance. We have difficulty accepting a situation when we have expectations that the situation shouldn't be happening. When Jesus tells his disciples in today's gospel that he is going

to have to die, they have a hard time accepting his death because: it was something that they didn't expect and they thought it should not be happening. And they react in all the ways we have just talked about: they try to argue with Jesus about it, they try to run and hide from it (remember when they hid behind closed doors?) and they freeze when they are confronted by others, about being Jesus' disciples.

Jesus was fully human and he wrestled with his anger and fear about his crucifixion, but in the end, he chose acceptance. He chose to accept the path his father had chosen for him even if he didn't fully understand it. He chose to place his trust in God.

When we are troubled and facing a difficult situation, God knows that we too are very human and will probably react at first with all kinds of emotions and reactions. God also invites us to follow the example of his Son, Jesus, who chose acceptance and trust.

Acceptance is not submission; it's not the same as giving up or giving in. It is acknowledgment of the facts and the reality of a situation, Then, deciding what you're going to do about it, trusting that God is walking through it with you every step of the way.

I'd like to close by sharing with you one of my favorite quotes about Acceptance:

**Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today.
When I am disturbed,
It is because I find some person, place, thing, situation --
Some fact of my life -- unacceptable to me,
And I can find no serenity until I accept
That person, place, thing, or situation
As being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this
moment.
Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by
mistake.**

Unless I accept life completely on life's terms,

I cannot be happy.

I need to concentrate not so much

On what needs to be changed in my situation or in the world

As on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes."

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th Edition p. 417

Accepting life on life's terms, not on our terms. Accepting life on God's terms, not on our terms. That's what the disciples were challenged to do, that's what Jesus decided to do and that's what we're invited to do this Lenten season and throughout our life journey. May we be granted the courage and the strength to choose acceptance and trust.

Let us pray:

God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can,

And the wisdom to know the difference. Amen

Amen.

“Whatever you resist, persists.” Energy goes where attention flows.

If you accept your situation, release your fear and trust in God to guide you, your life will flow in God’s rhythm, not the worlds. 2 weeks before my surgery. Totally focused on trust rather than fear. Dialogue with God rather than with myself. My inner critic, judge (Sigrid)

First Reading

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt--a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Psalm

Psalm 51:1-12

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment. ⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me. ⁶ You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I

shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Include psalm, do movement. Lead them in part of movement. How do we create a clean heart within us? We can't. God can. We have to go to God with humility, admit our shortcomings and mistakes and turn them over to God. 5th step in AA. Tell about this. And my doing it. Inventory. What's working and what's not.

Second Reading

Hebrews 5:5-10

5 So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you";⁶ as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.⁸ Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered;⁹ and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,¹⁰ having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

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