

God's Limitless Mercy

Jer. 31: 31-34; Heb. 5: 7-9; Jn. 12: 20-33

In the Collect for this Sunday, we pray that we may 'walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed Himself over to death.' As the old saying goes: We should be careful what we pray for. Are we really prepared to walk the same walk with Jesus? Remember what Jesus told His disciples, James and John when their mother asked that they be seated at His right and left side in heaven: 'Can you drink the cup of suffering that I am about to drink?' (Matt. 20: 22)

Fortunately for us, God is very merciful. He does not expect us to follow Jesus' example to the letter. Jesus took our place and made the supreme sacrifice for our sins. And, even though He was the Son of God, it was not easy. Paul tells us that, in His humanity, 'Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save Him from death.' But Jesus was obedient and 'having been made perfect, He became the source of salvation for all who obey Him.' We rely on God's mercy. Without it, and with our tendency to sin, we would be lost.

In the First Reading, God tells Jeremiah that He is going to make a new covenant with the Israelites. Even though the Israelites had broken the first covenant that He had made with them by not following His commandments and speaking against Him, God said that He would 'forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.' God never gives up on His people.

Not only would He forgive the Israelites but also He would forget their sins. He would be their God and they would be His people. He would restore the covenant. God shows that He is all-forgiving. He is constant. He is faithful to His people, even when they are not faithful to Him. His mercy is boundless. This is a message for us as well. When we sin, we have faith that God will forgive us as He forgave the Israelites.

For this new covenant, stone tablets would not be required. Instead God said that He would write His law on the hearts of the people so that He would be known directly and personally by everyone, even the lowliest. God extended His mercy to everyone.

The new covenant was not fulfilled immediately. In fact, it would be several hundred years before the covenant would be fulfilled in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. After Jesus ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to enter the hearts of the people. Thus, the Law of God was written directly on the hearts of the people in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.

In this season of Lent, we reflect on our sins especially the ways in which we have fallen short in our love of God and love of neighbour. We need God's mercy and forgiveness; otherwise, the weight of our sins would crush us. So we crave the forgiveness of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We trust in the new covenant that was sealed by Jesus Christ on the Cross. We take comfort in the merciful words of God delivered through His prophet: '...for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.'