

February 24 2019

Father was giving a homily at the ten o'clock Mass on Sunday about forgiveness of enemies, and how we should all forgive our enemies and want to forgive our enemies. He preached for 20 minutes, then he asked, "How many of you plan to forgive your enemies?" Twenty percent of the congregation raised their hands. So he preached another 15 minutes, then he asked again, "How many are going to forgive your enemies?" Eighty percent raised their hands. So he preached another 15 minutes. The people realized they were going to lose their place at Denny's, or Biscuit's, or somewhere else, so they realized they better raise their hands. So when he asked again, "How many of you are going to forgive your enemies?" Everybody but one person raised their hands. A little old lady bearing a cane didn't raise her hand. Father looks at her and says, "Mrs. Jones, why aren't you going to forgive your enemies?" She said, "I don't have any." He goes, "Wow, would you please come up here and let us know why you don't have any enemies." So she came up. He said, "How old are you?" She said, "93." He said, "And why don't you have any enemies?" With a gleam in her eye and an evil laugh she said, "I outlived all those witches."

In our first reading, we have the story of David and Saul meeting in a valley. There is a whole lot that's going on before this story that we see in our first reading. David, of course, was anointed second king of Israel. Saul was the first, but Saul displeased the Lord by going to soothsayers and people reading crystal balls and he went to one lady who could speak to the dead. So, he went to talk to one of the old prophets. This displeased God so much that he had David anointed king. But David was also Saul's son-in-law. He married Saul's daughter. The people liked David better. Even in the songs they sang about Saul and David, David came out better. So, Saul got very very jealous and was filled with hatred for David. So much so, he tried to kill him at every opportunity. One day, David took a couple hundred men and they went on the run for years. All over the desert, all over Israel, trying to stay ahead of Saul and his army. Our story comes into play today, Saul and his army are camped on one side of the valley and David and his army are coming up at night to recon the area and check everything out. David sees where Saul is lying, asleep. He goes over there and he takes a spear and a jug of water. Now David has a plan, but Abeshai wants to just kill Saul on the spot. But David lets him know, a sign that David was enlightened. "You don't right an evil by doing an evil deed." Evil does not solve evil. So he goes across the valley and he calls out and wakes up Saul and his troops. Saul wakes up and realizes how close he was to death and so because of David's kindness to his enemy, the war is over. There's no more war between them; they go their separate ways. Eventually David is able, after Saul's death, to unite the two pieces of Israel and Judah into one kingdom.

David let us know what Jesus is talking about very early on, evil does not solve evil. Revenge does not solve anything; anger does not solve anything. Jesus lets us know in today's gospel that it's about us. Forgive our enemies, everybody thinks, "Oh, it's about my enemy." No, it's about you. Do good to others; it's about you. Love your enemies. That doesn't mean you have to hug them and kiss them, and all that kind of thing. It just means; yes, I realize God wants you in heaven, He wants me in heaven, but when I get there, I'm asking for a cloud in another neighborhood. You can do that. I plan to do it. You are not going to find me, okay. Ha ha ha.

Jesus is letting us know, it's about us, because here's the thing; if we want to have spiritual, physical health, mental health, all these healths, Jesus is giving us a map, a prescription, today. Think about it. Somebody makes us angry, and we hold onto that anger. Does the other person get hurt? Does the other person get upset? No, because they probably don't even know we are angry at them. Who gets upset, who gets messed up? We do; it affects our blood pressure, it affects our ability to receive God's grace, it affects our stomach acid, we have to start taking Tums or Rolaids or whatever else, so it's about us. We drive down Hunt Hwy. or in the east valley and somebody makes us mad. Do they know it? No, because their window is rolled up and so is ours. They don't even know that we're mad, they just go on down the road and go to where they're going. And yet, here we are, fuming. Some people are going, "Oh now I've got to go to confession." Well, you know what? You shouldn't have got angry. You should have forgiven your enemy, who happened to be that person at that time.

Jesus wants us to be able to be healthy and holy, and He gives us all these prescriptions in the scriptures, and this is one of the best ones. Now, what He's talking about is called, "The law of the echo chamber," in psychology. The law of the echo chamber says; if you shout into an echo chamber, it will come back to you, if you curse into an echo chamber, it will come back to you, if you sing into an echo chamber, it will come back to you. It's just like life; you get back from life what you put into it. Forgive and you'll be forgiven, give and it will be given to you. Stop and look, who's the first person that has to act? Us, then God will act. God's waiting for us to act. If we forgive, He'll forgive us. He's not going to forgive us until we forgive. Many times in scripture it says that, even the Our Father prayer says that. Give; we give, we act charitable, God will bring blessings upon us but we have to be the first one to act. We have to be the one that says, "Okay, I'm doing this for you but I'm also doing this for me." There is a law in prayer that says if you pray for somebody, it comes back to you too. Grace is the same way. There is a famous story about a foolish man who heard that Buddha taught that you should never return evil with evil. (Like King David). One day the man set out to meet Buddha and decided to see if he practiced what he preached. He met him on the road and he started heaping all sorts of verbal abuse on him, cussing and swearing at him, all kinds of things. Meanwhile, Buddha just sat there listening patiently. When the man finally ran out of things to say, Buddha says, "My son, if a man declines to accept a gift from another, to whom does the gift go?" The man replies forcefully, "Any fool knows that, it goes back to the giver." "My son," Buddha said, "You have just given me much verbal abuse, I decline to accept your gift." The man made no further reply. Buddha then told him, "My son, a man who slanders a virtuous person is like a man who spits in the sky, the spittle doesn't stay on the sky, it comes back and hits you in the face. A man who throws dust into the wind doesn't get it on anybody else, it comes back and hits him in the face." So this is the law of the echo; whatever we do will come back to us. If we are charitable, if we're kind, if we're forgiving, if we're loving, it comes back to us. God's letting us know; it's up to us what we get, it's up to us how we feel, it's up to us to take the first step. So when God says, "Forgive your enemies." It's for our own well-being, it's not for theirs, most of the time they don't know. When He says, "Love your enemies, I think we all know, it's for your well-being. When He says, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," it's for our own well-being not for theirs. Yes, they will benefit from our changed disposition and attitude, but it's about us. Jesus wants us to know, "No bad deed ever remedies another bad deed. Only good triumphs over evil." He is telling us how to do that. I have a friend, that when somebody heaps abuse on her; gets nasty with her, she looks at them and she says, "Get behind me Satan." What happens? They shut up, with this look on their face. "She just called me the devil." Well, you're acting like it. So she gets rid of that, it just goes away. It's like, I refuse to accept your gift. How

many of us if we stopped for a moment, counted to ten, would be able to say that? I refuse to accept your gift. Or are we going to jump in with our anger and our tempers and go at it. We hold onto anger, we hold onto revenge, so much and it doesn't do anything for us. Doesn't do anything to the other person and doesn't do anything for us. So the prescription for peace of mind, heart and soul, for health and well-being; physically, mentally, spiritually, is what we find in the gospel. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, love your enemy as yourself, be charitable, be forgiving. God bless you.