

## HOMILY 7<sup>TH</sup> SUN OT YRC 2019

There was a miserly man who died and appeared before St. Peter at the pearly gates. St. Peter checked the man's records and said: "I am sorry but there is nothing on your record that indicates love of neighbor or helping the poor." The man replied: "Check your records. One time I gave a quarter to a homeless man." St. Peter replied: "There is a footnote here that I overlooked. I have to check upstairs." When St. Peter came back he said: "They told me to give you your quarter back and tell you that you are going to hell." Jesus does call us to a form of radical love in the Gospel reading today. He says: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you." This kind of goes against our natural inclinations don't you think? Or does it?

We are reminded in the second reading that we share in the earthly nature of Adam and in the spiritual nature of Jesus Christ. We are all descended from Adam, but we were also made in the image and likeness of God. We share in the earthly nature of Adam, and the spiritual nature of Jesus. It is almost as if we have two creatures inside of us. One with the earthly nature of Adam that can be vicious and resentful, wanting to get even with the one who hurt us, and the spiritual nature of Jesus Christ that is loving and forgiving. The one who wins is the one we feed, the one we nourish. It is very much a part of our nature to be loving and forgiving, but we have to be purposeful about it. Love is not about a feeling. Love is what we do.

So how do we feed and nourish our spiritual nature. As soon as we call someone an enemy, as soon as we judge and condemn someone, we are admitting our unwillingness to love. Jesus tells us in the Gospel reading today: "Stop judging...Stop condemning...Forgive." Forgiveness is usually the first step towards loving. Forgiveness is about letting go of the anger and resentment and the desire to get even. It does not mean that what the person did to hurt you

was ok. It does not mean that you have to forget the offense; it does not mean that you cannot protect yourself from future hurts from them. It is just about letting go of the anger and desire to get even. This is a process, you may need to sit with your feelings for a while, but until you forgive you cannot love.

One of the things that can help in forgiveness is what Jesus tells us in the Gospel: “pray for those who mistreat you.” And this does not mean to pray for a quick and sudden death for the person who mistreated you. It does not mean to pray that the person changes to see things that way I see them. We need to pray that we can see that person who mistreated us as Jesus sees them. Jesus always sees us through the eyes of love and that is how we need to learn to love.

Jesus tells us the Gospel reading today the reward we will receive when we love: “Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”