

4th Sunday of Lent B

March 11, 2018

Have you ever been at your wit's ends and someone else steps in and helps you out before you hit the proverbial wall?

Maybe at the end of a long day of child, work, and household wrangling... when you're exhausted isn't it great when someone steps in and gives you a hand lifting the load?

Or when your schedule is jammed packed with nothing but high priority tasks and assignment and there is more on your "to-do" list than any superhero can possibly accomplish... and someone unexpectedly helps you out... and you have a shred of sanity remaining when it's all said and done.

The Church does that for us this week as it steps in with some readings that may help us as Lent seems to drag on.... When we might be losing steam during Lent... and our resolve diminishing.

Our readings today remind us of God's relentless love for humankind and his persistent presence in the lives of those who struggle... like the People of Israel... and the Ephesians... and people like you and me.

As we might be flagging and lagging... God intervenes... God steps-in and steps-up... as God has done throughout human history.

Our first reading describes a time when the people of Judah were consistently turning away from God... the scripture says they added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all the abominations of the nations and polluting the Lord's temple... and yet God's response to their infidelity... we

are told... early and often did the LORD send his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people and his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised his warnings, and scoffed at his prophets.

God responded to a history of infidelity and abomination... with compassion. Early and often did God send his messenger... and after the prophetic messengers were mocked and ridiculed and scoffed... God sent still more. God doesn't take our rejection easily and there is intervention after intervention... until we respond.

God knows human nature... God know that we do not all catch-on the first time... that we forget and need to be reminded... to be led... to be propped-up throughout our change of ways. We are backsliders... We are all backsliders and God is our backstop.

St. Paul echoes this theme of God's relentless love for you as he tells the Ephesians that God is rich in mercy... and his proof for this statement is that God had great love for us...even when we were dead in our transgressions... even in our sinfulness... even when we rejected and ignored God's ways... he brought us to life with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised up with him. Grace is God's freely given gift of love to we who are sinful and do not deserve it... God's grace cannot be earned... it is offered by God out of love.

So even if our Lenten resolve is fading and the demands of the world seem to be winning out... and our actions do not live up to our intentions... God loves you... God responds to you with the richness of his mercy. God steps in, when we fall down.

In the Gospel we hear some of the most familiar words of scripture in contemporary society... as St. John says...

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.

But let's read beyond what shows up on the poster at sporting events.....

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

The Son of God came not to condemn us for our sinful ways... but to save us from our sinful ways ... and don't we need to be saved more than we need to be condemned.

So in this last run of Lent find resolve knowing that God is with you and has always been so... that God loves you... and responds to your failings with mercy and compassion...

So...Early and often... return to God.

©2018 Dcn. B. Fobes