

Second Sunday of Creation

September 10, 2023

Sister Ana Cloughly, OSB shares a reflection on the scripture readings: Ezekiel 33:7-9; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20

The Scriptures today call us to responsibility, a specific type of responsibility. Not just for ourselves, but responsibility for each other and the wider community. This responsibility does not come from our self-righteous ideals or cultural morality, but rather it comes from listening to God. And our level of responsibility extends beyond our personal lives.

When God was speaking to Ezekiel, he said “Thus says the LORD: You, son of man, I have appointed watchman for the house of Israel; when you hear me say anything, you shall warn them for me. If I tell the wicked, ‘O wicked one, you shall surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked from his way, the wicked shall die for his guilt, but I will hold you responsible for his death. But if you warn the wicked, trying to turn him from his way, and he refuses to turn from his way, he shall die for his guilt, but you shall save yourself.”

God’s message was not meant for Ezekiel alone, but for the whole House of Israel. The implication being, when God speaks to an individual that “word” impacts far more than one person’s life.

In the gospel, Jesus calls us to speak to those who sin against us. First individually, then with witnesses, and finally before the church. At first glance, it may seem that Jesus is helping his disciples to be able to foster healthy, personal relationships supported by the church. And that is true but what he goes on to say gives this particular reading its greater context within the whole of the gospels. Jesus says, “If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector.”

How did Jesus treat Gentiles and tax collectors? He opened lines of communication, understanding and friendship with them. And most of all he loved them.

In this season of creation, I have been reflecting on the way in which Jesus opened the hearts of his disciples to a wider vision of love and of God’s justice.

We know today what the people of Jesus this time did not know. We live on a planet called earth with limited space and resources. What I do affects everyone else. What you do affects me and the rest of the world. The simple truth is we cannot heal something we are not connected to. The earth is all there is; all of life shares the same home. As Christians, we share the belief that God created it all and that it is good. God's love and justice encompasses everything.

Jesus tells us to call each other to living justly. We know today that angry speech and militaristic actions close down communication and civil discourse, which is not productive. Instead, we must speak our truth in love.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus extends our understanding of who our neighbor is. Pope Francis in his apostolic letter *Laudato Si'* further widens our understanding of neighbor to include plants and animals that share this earth.

St. Paul tells us that, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law."