

## From Bad News to Good News for Mortals like Us

Mortals of the pre Christian era such as King Ahab, King David, and Job came face to face daily with the consequences of sin--their separation from The Creator. There was no good news for them. They were continually up against the proverbially brick wall when it came to living up to The Law.

In the Old Testament Lesson we read today, from 1 Kings (and the alternative optional reading from 2 Samuel) we see that even the sins of kings were dealt with severely even to the point of death as in the case of King Ahab. In both cases the sin was envy and greed which caused each to take what was not theirs at the expense of another's life. Though, each expressed a form of sorrow, grief or repentance, the result was not forgiveness, but justice was served as punishment with retribution fitting the transgression. Both stories are examples of our separation from God before God sent His son, Jesus, to reunite us. In Job we hear about his search for God forward and backward; to the left and to the right, but Job cannot perceive Him, or see Him anywhere; so he just wants to vanish into the darkness. Similarly king David felt such depth of despair upon receiving the punishment of the death of his son. All of these examples suggest a disconnect or separation from God.

Both psalms chosen for today show how much the pre-Christian people of God yearned for forgiveness and a clean slate with sins forgotten and only joy and righteousness in the presence of God.

Canon Paul Edwards in his Church Without Walls workshop/seminar taught us that this separation from God was the thing Jesus agonized most about having to endure the cross (not the agonizing physical pain-but the separation from God). He had to be separated from God to fully experience what we do as humans-to fully fulfill His perfect sacrifice for our sins. This is what those witnessing were hearing when Jesus cried out "My God, my God why have You forsaken me?"

As Paul reminded the Galatians, we cannot be freed from guilt and separation from God through laws, but rather, by our faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior sent by God. In this way we no longer live for human desire but rather Christ lives in us reuniting us with God.

To illustrate this, the woman in today's Gospel, whose sins were many, was not freed from guilt by laws, but rather, by her belief in Christ, which she demonstrated by constant attendance to Him.

Hence, ladies and gentlemen, the good news is: we went from being mortals separated from God, to mortals in the presence of God-Jesus, our savior. Without Jesus it was impossible to be saved. Now, with Jesus, all things are possible.

Yup, this is pretty good news. This Jesus who is able to re-connect us with God through His ultimate sacrifice on the cross. A gift such as this deserves a lot of gratitude; which is at least part of the reason you and I are here today.

So, what does all this mean for us? Well, luckily, since we have Jesus as our savior and since with Him all things are possible, like the woman in Luke's gospel, we can be assured of God's forgiveness, acceptance and love--our reconnection through our faith.

Mortals in the Old Testament weren't facing very good news vs. mortals like us who, because of the New Testament, have Jesus and the Great News.

And with Jesus and the New Testament comes a New Covenant-the summary of The Law-which says: Love the Lord your God with all you heart, soul and mind; and, likewise, love your neighbor as yourself. And, the way you do the first is to do the last; that is, the way you love God is to love your neighbor.

Jesus, on the night, of the Last Supper, showed His disciples, first hand, how this works-He washed their feet. The King of Kings-God incarnate was servant to His fellow man.

I think He's showing us a couple of things here: One is what we hear a lot about in the Book of James where he talks about faith alone without works is useless; it's not enough to say "I believe." We need to manifest this belief by loving each other as God loves us. Further, since this is pretty tough to do, Jesus gives us the example of the foot washing, which shows the meaning of "some of the last will be first and the first will be last." Jesus was and is definitely first because he showed the humility of being last in washing the feet of His followers, and making the ultimate sacrifice for us all on the cross.

As such, I'm pretty sure Jesus has a royal suite in the Kingdom next in size only to the Father's. He told His disciples that He was going where they could not go-to prepare for them a place in His Father's mansion. He went there to prepare a place for us, too.

Question is, what the size of our future heavenly suit might be like? Maybe, it will have something to do with how we exercise our faith by works in this transitory life; and, as a result, where we will fall in the lineup as to who will be first and who will be last.

Thank-you Jesus for the Good News! Alleluia! Alleluia! And AMEN!