

Pentecost 19 – 10/08/2023 – A

In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus is telling yet another parable. I wonder if Jesus doesn't think that his crowd, which included church leaders, chief priests and Pharisees, were not getting his point. Or maybe Jesus knew they understood what he was saying but they were not willing to admit it. Here Jesus was telling another story that was really about his audience, especially the church leaders.

I can't directly recall anyone or myself fully using this approach to get a point across. But what does come to mind is an Old Testament character that listened to a story told by a prophet, and he recognized himself in the story. That character being David.

12 So the LORD sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story: "There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. ² The rich man owned a great many sheep and cattle. ³ The poor man owned nothing but one little lamb he had bought. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man's own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter. ⁴ One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing an animal from his own flock or herd, he took the poor man's lamb and killed it and prepared it for his guest."

⁵ David was furious. "As surely as the LORD lives," he vowed, "any man who would do such a thing deserves to die! ⁶ He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity."

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, "You are that man! The LORD, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. ⁸ I gave you your master's house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. ⁹ Why, then, have you despised the word of the LORD and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and stolen his wife. ¹⁰ From this time on, your family will live by the sword because you have despised me by taking Uriah's wife to be your own.

David Confesses His Guilt

¹³ Then David confessed to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "Yes, but the LORD has forgiven you, and you won't die for this

sin. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, because you have shown utter contempt for the word of the LORD^[a] by doing this, your child will die.”

²² David fasted and wept while the child was alive, as he thought that Perhaps the LORD will be gracious to him and let the child live.’ ²³ But why should I fast when he is dead? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him one day, but he cannot return to me.”

²⁴ Then David comforted Bathsheba, his wife, and slept with her. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and David^[c] named him Solomon.

David recognized that he was the person in the story and confessed his separation from God, his sin. What he realized is that he had misused the power that he had been given. He used his power to take advantage of many people. This is the issue here as well as in our Gospel lesson.

God have given the chief priests and Pharisees a great deal of power and control which they used for their gain and not the gain of others. Does this sound like last week’s sermon? Jesus is still making the same point.

In our Gospel lesson we have a landowner, which we can relate to God. The landowner gave his tenants, which can be related to the chief priests and Pharisees, responsibility over the land and the agreement was that they would pay the landowner for the use of the land. The tenants thought that they would exert power and control over the landowner and not pay him and keep the land.

When it came time to collect, the landowner sent first his slaves to collect the payment. The tenants killed one and stoned the other. More slaves were sent with the same treatment. The landowner sent his son thinking the tenants would respect his son, but no they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

The tenants felt that since they were on the land they were in control. Of course, when Jesus asked what would happen when the landowner came, the chief priests and Pharisees said that he would put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the land to other tenants. But wait a minute, who was Jesus really talking about?

Jesus reminded them of the scripture, Psalm 118:22 that the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The cornerstone was and is Jesus, which they were rejecting. Jesus tells them that since they are not producing fruit in the kingdom that the kingdom will be taken away from them.

Once again they wanted to arrest Jesus, but he had the backing of the crowds as they looked at Jesus as a prophet. Thus, they were scared to arrest him. Jesus was questioning their teaching of the law.

We would like to say that we are not like the tenants or the chief priests and Pharisees. In reality we may not be as violent as they were. My hope is that we might be able to see how we do reject Jesus and along with the tenants can be blind. They somehow thought that once they took care of the son, they had it made.

The tenants focus was not on producing fruit for others. This is what Jesus was saying that kingdom living is about. We are called to show love to our neighbors. Here at Faith, we do show love to our neighbors in many ways, but what might we be missing?

In listening to the YouTube videos for our Christ's Kaleidoscope study, I am reminded over and over again of the history that we are not teaching in our schools. We don't want people to feel uncomfortable. If we don't feel uncomfortable then we are not learning the truth of what white people have put races other than our own through.

On Friday night I went to see *To Kill a Mocking Bird* at the Wharton. Even though written in 1960, the issues with racism are still with us. They seem to be camouflaged in our systems today. This creates a blindness for us to see our racism.

We often think racism is whether we like someone or not, but it is about words and ideas and how they affect others. At the heartbeat of racism is denial. Anti-racism is about confession. Before we can try and say that we are not racist, we are called to study the history of races and our role as white people in it.

You see it's not only what is happening today, but it is the history of races that brings us to where we are today. Many white people are scared of not being the ruling race. I don't believe that that is the way God set it up. All races are equal in God's eyes.

Jesus tries to tell us again today that it is about a God's beloved community working together for the betterment and support of each other. I continue to discover my blindness to my racism and white privilege. It is an ongoing process as we have been indoctrinated to think that the white race is the superior race.

I believe loving our neighbor is about learning about other races', in general other people's histories that are different than we are. It will help us to see that we are all equal in God's eyes. This will reduce our blindness in being able to love our neighbor.

Let us pray, Gracious God, you call us to love our neighbors, but sometimes it makes us feel uncomfortable. We have been taught throughout history that the white race is superior even though we don't believe that is what you have taught us and continue to try and teach us. Even your son, our savior, Jesus was Jewish. We ask that your Holy Spirit would shine on our blindness and help us to begin to see that you love all people and not just one person or race is superior. In Jesus, name, Amen.