

Sunday, February 24, 2019

Genesis 45:3-11,15

I Cor:135-38, 42-50

Luke 6:27-38

Do Unto Others and Give Hope

There once lived two monkeys on the same island and a fish who lived in the water close by. The first monkey followed the golden rule, always trying to treat others as he wanted to be treated. But he sometimes applied the golden rule foolishly. Now one day a big flood came. As the threatening waters rose, the foolish monkey climbed a tree to safety. Then he looked down and saw a fish struggling in the water. He thought, "I wanted to be lifted from the water." So he reached down and grabbed the fish from the water, lifting him to safety on a high branch. Of course that didn't work. The fish died.

The second monkey whose name is Kita also followed the golden rule. This monkey learned that fish die when taken from water. So when the flood came, she considered taking a fish from the water. But she imagined herself in his situation. She asked, "Am I now willing that if I were in the same situation as the fish, then I be taken from the water?" She answered, "Gosh no: this would kill me!" So she left the fish in the water. Which applied the Golden Rule better?

The two monkeys each applied the golden rule- the foolish monkey applied it literally- treat others as you want to be treated. He wanted to be taken from the water, so he took the fish from the water. He didn't consider how fish and monkeys differ. Being taken from the water saves a monkey but kills a fish.

But Kita was much wiser. When Kita considered taking the fish from the water, she tried to know the situation of the fish (who had different likes, dislikes, and needs). She imagined being in the fish's exact place and having this same thing done to her. She tested her consistency by asking: "Am I now willing that if I were in the same situation as the fish, then I be taken from the water?" Finally, she acted on the golden rule (leaving the fish in the water). Kita was just a smart monkey!

Jesus was teaching up on the mountain side where many people heard him. He spoke about being blessed and happy and what this means as we shared last week. In today's passage, Jesus challenges everyone to do something different than is expected. Jesus has the right to shock disciples with teaching they don't like to hear, because he is the Lord and so those listening are fascinated with his words. The difficulty arises when they are told to put his words into action.

Those listening to Jesus knew about loving others and how essential it is for human society to progress but when Jesus said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who

curse you and pray for those who mistreat you, “ this was something different. How can one really love the ones who hurt you?

It is difficult to do and it means taking action in peace and with hope for the betterment of all. In his book *What Good Is God?* Philip Yancey illustrates what it means to be challenged by one’s enemy and to bring about change. Yancey tells the story of the 2004 Ukraine election in which the reformer Victor Yushchenko challenged the entrenched party and nearly died for it. On election-day the exit polls showed Yushchenko with a comfortable lead, but through outright fraud, the government had reversed those results.

Yancey writes: That evening the state-run television reported, "Ladies and gentlemen, we announce that the challenger Victor Yushchenko has been decisively defeated." However, government authorities had not taken into account one feature of Ukrainian television, the translation it provides for the hearing-impaired. On the small screen insert in the lower right-hand corner of the television screen a brave woman raised by deaf-mute parents gave a different message in sign language. "I am addressing all the deaf citizens of Ukraine. Don't believe what they say. They are lying, and I am ashamed to translate these lies. Yushchnko is our President!" No one in the studio understood her radical sign-language message. Inspired by that courageous translator, deaf people led what became known as the Orange Revolution.

They text-messaged their friends on mobile phones about the fraudulent elections, and soon other journalists took courage ... and likewise refused to broadcast the party line. Over the next few weeks as many as a million people wearing orange flooded the capital city of Kiev to demand new elections. The government finally buckled under the pressure, consenting to new elections, and this time Yushchenko emerged as the undisputed winner. The translator took her life into her hands by telling the truth through the deaf community. She used the system to explain the truth she knew about the corrupt government.

Jesus was like this translator in the corner of the screen as he taught from the mountainside. “Don't believe the big screen—they're lying. It's the poor who are blessed, not the rich. Mourners are blessed too, as well as those who hunger and thirst, and the persecuted. Those who go through life thinking they're on top will end up on the bottom. And those who go through life feeling they're at the very bottom will end up on top. After all, what does it profit a person to gain the whole world and lose his soul?”

But how you call them out on their deceitful and evil ways makes a difference. We might recall the words of C.S. Lewis, "Surely what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for

what sort of man he is. If there are rats in a cellar, you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not create the rats; it only prevents them from hiding. In the same way, the suddenness of the provocation does not make me ill-tempered; it only shows me what an ill-tempered man I am."

Think about the reaction that Christ calls us to have if someone strikes us on the cheek. What kind of a person would that make us? To turn the other cheek and refuse to react with similar anger or malice shows the world we are Christian. So if what we do when we are taken off guard is the best evidence of what sort of person we are, let us pray our reactions show that we are good Christians! We must also remember that these people need your love, so take it upon yourselves to do good and offer to them what they need without expecting anything back. Care enough to confront and trust your love and trust God. Because you are the children sons and daughters of God, your reward will be great.

How will you remember the golden rule wisely? KITA the monkey might help.

K KNOW "How would my action affect others?"

I IMAGINE: "What would it be like to have this done to me in the same situation?"

T TEST for consistency: "Am I now willing that if I were in the same situation then this be done to me?"

A ACT toward others only as you're willing to be treated in the same situation.

Let us strive to love our enemies and know that God truly loves you. as Christ's body the church, our mission is to change the world by changing lives in humble, merciful love. This is Christ's love being shared in faith and offered in hope. For without having hope in our hearts we cannot bring about change in circumstances to lives upset and needing a new focus. Remember to bring hope as we live out Jesus' teachings, to Do to others what you hope they will do for you."

PRAYER

God of grace and love, we praise you for Christ's teaching to love even our enemies. Enable us to do this without counting the cost and knowing that we are striving to be like you, and reflecting your light. Bless us we pray as we seek to do your work according to your will as we strive to change the world through changing lives. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.