

## Reflection

March 12, 2021

Mark 14:2-10

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*Come back to me with all your heart. Don't let fear keep us apart. Trees do bend, grow straight and tall. So must we to others call. Long have I waited for your coming home to me and living deeply our new life. The wilderness will lead you to the place where I will speak. Integrity and justice with tenderness you shall know. Long have I waited for your coming home to me and living deeply our new life. You shall sleep secure with peace. Faithfulness will be your joy. Long have I waited for our coming home to me and living deeply our new life. (Gregory Norbert, Weston Priory 1971)*

Both readings today are about our total commitment to God. We'll first look at the Book of Hosea, an eighth century prophet in the Hebrew Scriptures in Israel. Hosea wrote the book to remind the Israelites – and us – that ours is a loving God whose loyalty to His people is unwavering. His message was also one of warning to those who would turn their backs on God's love. The first part of the book is a description of an adulteress and a faithful Husband ... symbolic of the unfaithfulness of Israel to God through idolatry; the second part of the book is a condemnation of Israel for the worship of idols, BUT it is followed by the promises and mercies of God. It shows how God's love will always take back an unfaithful wife/a person when s/he return to God with a repentant heart.

In today's text, God says "I will heal their defection, I will love them freely for my wrath is turned away from them. I will be like the dew for Israel; they shall blossom like the lily ... His splendor shall be like the olive tree and His fragrance shall be like the Lebanon cedar and they shall dwell in his shade and raise grain. ..."

Simply stated, Hosea was a prophet to the rebellious nation of Israel. God used Hosea's life to demonstrate his unconditional love. The Lord told Hosea to marry a prostitute. He married her, loved her and devoted his life to her. She relapsed into her old ways and broke Hosea's heart and brought shame on their family. God then baffled Hosea by telling him to "Go get your wife again and bring her back to you and love her – for the Lord still loves Israel even though she turned to other gods."

### Practical Application

+ We may ask, "How could God or anyone still love us after what we did?" We need to remember God will NEVER give up on us. God will NEVER abandon us. There is absolutely nothing we can do or say that would cause God to stop loving us unconditionally.

+ We may ask, "Can we get caught up with other gods such as power, possessions, approval?" We need to remember that, indeed, sometimes we do sin – miss the mark – but if we have a sorrowful heart filled with repentance, God will bring us back to show His never-ending love ...  
*Come back to me with all your heart don't let fear keep us apart. Trees do bend grow straight and tall. So must we to others call. Long have I waited for your coming home to me and living deeply our new life. The wilderness will lead you to the place where I will speak. Integrity and justice with tenderness you shall know. Long have I waited for hour coming home to me and living deeply our new life. You shall sleep secure with peace. Faithfulness will be your joy. Long have I waited for your coming home to me and living deeply our new life.*

### **Psalm 81:6-10, 14, 17**

The Psalmist prays, "I will relieve your shoulder of its burden; I will free your hands from their heavy tasks. You cried to me in trouble and I saved you. I brought you out of the land of Egypt and set you free from slavery. Hear me and walk in my ways and I will feed you with the best of wheat and with honey from the rock. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it with good things. **All you need do is listen to my words and walk in my paths.**"

This is a splendid interconnection between the reading from Hosea and the Gospel story of the two great commandments of loving God and loving our neighbor.

### **Mark 12: 28-34**

Today, the section of Mark's Gospel we will be pondering is the story of one of the teachers of religion, a scribe and a lawyer, who asks Jesus about the first commandment of loving God with one's heart and soul and mind and strength and the second commandment to love one's neighbor. This question is also in Luke's Gospel (10:25-28) and in Matthew's Gospel (22:34-40), but there are differences. In Luke's Gospel the scribe comes as an *adversary to test Jesus*, whereas Mark presents the scribe more favorably. Jesus doesn't answer the scribe's question directly but asks, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" The Scribe gives the answer about loving God with full heart, soul, mind and strength, followed by loving the neighbor as one loves oneself. There is no apparent indication that the scribe is trying to trap Jesus.

Before leaving the scribe, Jesus tells him that he answered correctly and that he was not far from the Kingdom of God. After that, no one asked Jesus any more questions. The story ends without telling us whether the scribe becomes one of Jesus' followers.

Ultimately what Mark is telling us is that knowledge of God's law isn't enough and that the law isn't enough; rather, the law is something to be applied to life ... that is ... love God, love your neighbor.

I've heard this Gospel many times. This time the spirit nudged me to go to our IHM Constitutions and revisit the section on "Commitment to Be a Christian Community." I read *"Jesus loved the disciples and formed them into a community, calling each by name, recognizing each one as unique, forgiving each one's weaknesses and sin, teaching them that the greatest should be the least and servant of all, praying that they might be one ... sending them to proclaim the good news of salvation."*

*In Jesus' spirit we struggle to love one another with a genuine love, to accept, affirm and forgive one another and to encourage and challenge one another to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the reign of God and to be faithful to the discipleship we have publicly vowed."*

I ask myself: Am I faithful to this commitment? Is my circle big enough to enfold everyone or are some people outside my circle?

### **A Few Words on The Kingdom of God to Which Mark Calls Our Attention**

The coming of the Reign of God will be a *Kindom* of love, peace and justice wherein all will live in harmony and equity for all. We must continue to carry out this mission. Our call is to live the way Jesus lived when He called the last to be first; when He fed the hungry and welcomed the strangers and when He sheltered the homeless and abandoned ones. The ULTIMATE fulfillment and attainment of the Reign of God will come about when Jesus' returns at the end of time.