

Homily of Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C, 2022

1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23; Psalm 103:1-4, 8, 10, 12-13; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; Like 6:27-38

God sent Saul, the king of Israel, on a mission "to put the sinful Amalekites under a ban of destruction; [to] fight against them until you have exterminated them." But Saul disobeyed the Lord. He took the king captive and "pounced on the spoil." When Samuel confronted Saul, he gave his excuse, "from the spoil the army took sheep and oxen, the best of what had been banned, to sacrifice to the Lord" (1 Samuel 15:14-20).

Samuel announced to Saul, "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obedience to the Lord's command? Obedience is better than sacrifice, to listen, better than the fat of rams. For a sin of divination is rebellion, and arrogance, the crime of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord in turn has rejected you as king" (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

When Saul realized that God had chosen David to succeed him, he made eleven attempts, according the First Book of Samuel, to kill David:

- Saul attempted to kill David with a spear (1 Sam. 18:11); - Saul plotted so that the Philistines kill David (1 Sam. 18:17, 21); - Saul ordered his servants to kill David (1 Sam. 19:1); - Saul attempted to kill David with a spear (1 Sam. 19:10); - Saul sent messengers to kill David (1 Sam. 19:11); - Saul sent messengers to bring David back so he can kill David (1 Sam. 19:15); - Saul sent messengers to kill David (1 Sam. 19:20); - Saul sent messengers again to kill David (1 Sam. 19:21); - Saul went himself in an attempt to kill David (1 Sam. 19:22); - Saul pursued David to kill him (1 Sam. 23:15); - Saul pursued David to kill him (1 Sam. 26:2).

The eleventh attempt is as we read in the first reading, "Saul went down to the desert of Ziph with **three thousand men** ... to search for David." We can see how desperate Saul was. The reading informs us how David had the opportunity to revenge against Saul but chose to spare Saul's life. At that time when the law was, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Exodus 21:24), David stood out in showing mercy and forgiveness to Saul who made eleven attempts on his life. David is a perfect example of Jesus' teaching in today's gospel: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic..." (Luke 6:27-29).

This teaching of Jesus is very radical. It is typical of human nature to do good to those who are good to us, and to punish those who treat us badly. David and Jesus teach us today that this must not be so.

This teaching of Jesus is a difficult teaching to accept especially for those who are in pain and grieving due to wickedness of human beings, and where the enemies are unrelenting. Jesus is saying, "Do not revenge." "Do not retaliate." "Do not repay anyone evil for evil... for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'" (Romans 12:17). We pray for God's protection, healing, and intervention.

One can only but lament that the cause of suffering, poverty, violence, war, destruction of life and property, injustice, corruption, and other evils is because the Golden Rule (Luke 6:31), "Do to others as you would have them do to you," is neglected. Rather, what happens many times and in many places is that people do to others as they would not have others do to them. Unfortunately, "might is right" has continued to rule our society and our world. The sad histories of domination, conquest and occupation, slavery, ethnic cleansing, holocaust, massacre, colonization, underdevelopment, apartheid, segregation, discrimination, and so on are expressions of the rejection of the Golden Rule.

Since it is in the nature of human beings to violate the Golden Rule, it is, therefore, important that defenseless citizens must be protected by the leadership and the law. Unfortunately, in many places, either the leadership is the violator of the law, or the apparatus to protect defenseless citizens does not exist or does not function; thereby, abandoning defenseless citizens in the hands of those who kill and plunder.

While we pray for a radical Christian life of loving our enemies and praying for them, we, also, pray for the radical transformation of leaderships and the radical transformation of the apparatus of protecting defenseless citizens.

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