

FIRST READING

I am doing a new thing and I will give drink to my people.

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

43:18-21

The Lord says this:

Forget what happened long ago!
 Don't think about the past.
 I am creating something new.
 There it is! Do you see it?
 I have put a road in the desert and streams in thirsty land.
 Every wild animal honors me,
 even the jackals and owls.
 I provide water in the desert
 and streams in a thirsty land for my chosen people.
 I made them my own nation,
 so they would praise me.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

126:1-2ab, 2cd-3

R. (3a) The Lord has done great things for us.

or:

*R. (3) The Lord has done great things for us;
 we are filled with joy.*

It seemed like a dream
 when the Lord brought us back
 to the city of Zion.
 We celebrated with laughter and joyful songs.

R. The Lord has done great things for us.

or:

*R). The Lord has done great things for us;
 we are filled with joy.*

In the foreign nations it was said,
 "The Lord has worked miracles
 for his people."
 And so we celebrated

because the Lord had indeed
worked miracles for us.

R. The Lord has done great things for us.

or:

*R). The Lord has done great things for us;
we are filled with joy.*

SECOND READING

I struggle for what is ahead; I run for the goal.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians

3:12-14

Brothers and sisters:

I have not yet reached my goal,
and I am not perfect.

But Christ has taken hold of me.

So I keep on running and struggling to take hold of the prize.

My friends, I don't feel that I have already arrived.

But I forget what is behind,
and I struggle for what is ahead.

I run toward the goal,
so that I can win the prize of being called to heaven.

This is the prize that God offers
because of what Christ Jesus has done.

The word of the Lord.

VERSE BEFORE THE GOSPEL

Joel 2:12-13

R. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

With all your heart turn to me, says the Lord;
for I am tender and compassionate.

R. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL

Let the person among you without sin be the first to throw a stone.

† A reading from the holy gospel according to John

8:2-11

Jesus spent the night on the Mount of Olives.
Then early the next morning he went to the temple.
The people came to him,
and he sat down and started teaching them.

The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses
brought in a woman who had been caught in bed
with a man who was not her husband.
They made her stand in the middle of the crowd.
Then they said, "Teacher, this woman was caught
sleeping with a man who is not her husband.
The Law of Moses teaches
that a woman like this should be stoned to death!
What do you say?"

They asked Jesus this question,
because they wanted to test him and bring some charge against him.
But Jesus simply bent over
and started writing on the ground with his finger.

The crowd kept on asking Jesus about the woman.
Finally, he stood up and said,
"If any of you have never sinned,
then go ahead and throw the first stone at her!"
Once again he bent over and began writing on the ground.
The people left one by one,
beginning with the oldest one in the crowd.
Finally, Jesus and the woman were there alone.

Jesus stood up and asked her, "Where is everyone?
Isn't there anyone left to accuse you?"

"No, sir," the woman answered.

Then Jesus told her,
"I am not going to accuse you either.
You may go now, but don't sin anymore."

The gospel of the Lord.



Fifth Sunday of Lent Cycle C

Setting a context for the Gospel:
 Last Sunday we heard Jesus tell the story of a young man who had made mistakes and done wrong and EVERYBODY knew it. That's probably happened to all of us, hasn't it? We make a mistake or we do something wrong and lots of people know about it. But the son came back home admitting his sins and saying he was sorry. His father was so glad to have him back that he celebrated his return with a party instead of punishing him for making bad choices. Jesus told that story to remind us that God, our Father, loves us even when we are foolish and do bad things.

This Sunday we will listen to how Jesus treats a woman who had done wrong *in secret*.
 Distribute a rock to each of the children and tell them they will need it later.

Gospel Reading: John 8:2-11

Reflection and discussion:

Do you think most people have done something wrong and tried to hide it? Yes. We are not always good. We do things that we are ashamed of later, and we hope no one will know.

In this Gospel story the woman has done something wrong, and she gets caught trying to hide her sin. **Have you ever tried to hide the fact that you've done something wrong, but your mom or dad or teacher discover it anyway?** (*Tell the children that you aren't asking them for examples; you are just asking them if they can remember having the experience of being caught.*)

When you listened to this story, could you tell how Jesus feels about shaming someone in public? He doesn't like it, does he? He doesn't even look at the men who are publicly shaming the woman. He doesn't answer them. He just bends over and starts writing in the dirt with a stick or with his finger. Some people think he might have been writing the bad things that he had seen some of the men do. Or maybe he was just writing on the ground so that people would stop staring at the woman and look down to see what he was writing. We really don't know.

What does Jesus say to the men who want to punish the woman by throwing stones at her? Right, he says, "If any of you have never sinned, then you can throw a stone at her."

So then what happened? All the people who wanted to publicly shame the woman and punish her for doing wrong—all those people, one by one, had to admit to themselves that they, too, had done things that were wrong. Instead of throwing rocks at her, they just put down their stones and walked away quietly.

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How does Jesus treat the woman? Is he kind to her? What does he say?

Jesus does not shame the woman or tell her she should be punished. He just tells her not to sin again. He treats her with respect.

Do you think the woman will be a better person now that she has met Jesus? Why?

What does this story tell us about how followers of Jesus should treat people who do wrong? When we treat people with respect, we give them a chance to admit they are wrong and to change and be better people.

Prayer:

Intro: We are followers of Jesus, so we don't need rocks to throw at people who make mistakes or do bad things. Instead, we need Jesus to help us treat people with respect even when they are not always good. I will lead the prayers to Jesus and you will join by saying "Jesus, help me" after each prayer. As you say "Jesus, help me," **leave your rock in a pile on the floor as a sign that you admit that you do wrong things and that you know Jesus wants to help us help each other be good instead of being mean to each other.**

Let us pray:

Jesus, help me admit my mistakes and remember to ask you to help me be a better person.

ALL: Jesus, help me.

Jesus, help me to say I am sorry when I have hurt someone.

ALL: Jesus, help me.

Jesus, help me be kind to someone who has done wrong.

ALL: Jesus, help me.

Jesus, help me not to say hateful things to someone who has hurt me. ALL: Jesus, help me.

Jesus, thank you for your good example of kindness and respect to all; help me be like you.

ALL: Jesus, help me.

AMEN!