

The Second Sunday After Pentecost  
Proper 5  
Year B  
June 7, 2015

First Reading: Genesis 3:8-15  
Psalm 130

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

Gospel: Mark 3:20-35

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In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

About ten years ago, my parents adopted our second Satula family dog. He was not exactly a puppy, but still young and they named him Rebel II after one of his predecessors. And although my mom is the only one who lives with Rebel today, he is still considered the Satula family dog. Now in my experience, usually when you adopt puppies, they are easily trainable. But I'm sure some of you have had different experiences as we have had with Rebel. When he was younger, he was always destroying things with his teeth. We thought this was because he was teething. We were wrong. He is better than he was but still has the tendency to act out. He will now and then decide to chew on a book cover, pull things out of the garbage, eat something that we forgot to put far enough away from his reach on the counter, pull Christmas figures off the table and munch on them, and recently I was told he showed his disapproval of being kenneled and not coming to his brother's Celebration of New Ministry by flooding the kitchen as soon as he returned home.

Over the course of Rebel's life he has pretty much learned what is acceptable behavior and what is not. So when he does misbehave, he usually gives himself

away before any evidence of the transgression has been discovered. You'll walk downstairs and he'll have this mischievous look on his face or he'll head across the room from you when you enter, or he'll be sitting very quietly in his cage which is where he is put when he has done something bad —why postpone the inevitable. So we usually know when something has gone awry, now we just need to figure out what that something is. Nevertheless, most of the time he is quickly forgiven his transgression and is loved very much.

As is the case with Rebel, we all have the capacity to do things we should not do. And as is the case with Rebel, we have all probably done things we knew we shouldn't do, things that others would not have approved of and yet we've done them anyway. When we do things we shouldn't do we too usually end up giving ourselves away even though we may try our best not to as is the case with Adam and Eve in our reading from Genesis this morning. Today we hear that well known reading when God discovers that Adam and Eve disobeyed Him and committed sin by eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, therefore becoming aware of good and evil. God immediately realizes that something is amiss as He calls to them asking them where they are. Adam reveals himself and admits that he was hiding for he realized he was naked and God knows immediately what they have done. And as the story concludes Adam and Eve are driven from the Garden of Eden and now must work and labor, face trial and hardship and eventually die. This is what their sin cost them.

Since the time of Adam and Eve human beings have faced the daunting reality of working and laboring, suffering trial and tribulation. Someone who was

no stranger to these was St. Paul especially concerning The Church in Corinth. There were at times severe tensions between Paul and the Corinthians as well as between members within the community. There were many disputes and disagreements over how best to follow Christ's teachings which usually resulted in the Church declaring a right way and a wrong way with opponents on both sides. Paul was at times grievously insulted by members of the community. He had to constantly combat challenges by people Paul called "false apostles" who were spreading false teachings to the Corinthian Church. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians is a mixture of emotions between affliction and consolation. Paul also at one point wrote a letter to the Corinthians, now lost, called the "Letter of Tears" which he mentions in Second Corinthians as well as mentioning a visit he made to Corinth which he remembers as the painful visit. Concerning his missionary work Paul was no stranger to affliction and conflict.

Our passage from Second Corinthians today is a portion from a part of the letter titled Ministry of Hardship. Paul says in this letter "So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." What Paul is asking of the Corinthians here is very hard. When we experience affliction in our lives, trying to believe that it is only temporary, that the glory that

awaits us will make these current afflictions seem trivial and unimportant is very hard to wrap our heads around. Our afflictions are now, they are present, and they are all too real, and this future glory Paul speaks of, is not present.

However we must remember that Paul knows this and still asks us, calls us, even pleads with us to believe that through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ the future is no longer uncertain, through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ a house, eternal in the heavens, not made with human hands awaits us. When we encounter tribulation we are asked to try our best to remember this wonderful promise.

Paul faced challenges and affliction from the Corinthian Church and yet continued to strive to bring the light of Christ into the lives of its members. We face affliction too and one affliction we all must contend with is sin - turning away from God and from each other and from creation. And sin can produce other afflictions such as guilt and embarrassment and anger. After eating the fruit we are told their eyes are open and Adam and Eve immediately realize they have done something they should not have. Upon hearing God in the garden they hide and when God confronts them and asks them if they ate from the tree which was forbidden to them, Adam immediately blames Eve for his transgression who in turn immediately blames the serpent for her transgression, each trying to assuage their guilt and escape punishment by blaming another. Guilt, embarrassment, anger and other afflictions we face in life come up from time to time and Sin comes up all the time, every day in our lives for we are human.

I think it is important to remember exactly what happened at the end of the

Garden of Eden narrative. Yes Adam and Eve are cast out of the garden, yes they must labor and face hardship and death but before they are cast out, God made garments for them and clothed them and continued to abide with them and provide for them and their descendants.

Like Adam and Eve, we are made in the image of God and we are precious to God. This is exemplified in our Gospel reading from today where Jesus says to the crowds “whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.” My friends, we are all a part of the family of Jesus Christ and like with any family and friends, like with the family of the Corinthian Church, like with our family of St. James, sometimes disputes and disagreements can arise. Sometimes we will turn away from God. And we will always fall short of doing the will of God day in and day out which can make us fear God and hide from God and even want nothing to do with God because of fear, because of guilt and embarrassment. We can become angry with God over the afflictions we must face, that we may feel at times God is putting us through. When we find ourselves in these situations, situations of dispute, disagreement, anger whether between us and another or between us and God, remember Jesus’ words to the crowd today, what He asks of us, to do, “the will of God,” to practice mercy, love and forgiveness and to believe that we are precious to God. Even when we sin we are still precious and He will provide for us, even when we are facing terrible times in our lives we are still precious and God continues to provide. And one way God provides for us, for us here and now is through the family of St. James, a family of which is a part of the family of Jesus Christ. I was told this week by a

fellow clergy member of our diocese that he hopes when he attends other Celebrations of New Ministry in the future, he will feel the same graciousness and warmth he experienced from us, the family of St. James. Yes, we may not always agree and find ourselves at odds at times, at odds even with Jesus and that is okay. It is how we act and react during these times that Jesus wants us to keep in mind.

It is sometimes hard to see the blessings of life in times of sin and affliction. I am sure St. Paul found this at times with his dealings with the Corinthian Church and yet he continued to strive to do the will of God. That is what Jesus asks of us and it is through striving to do the will of God that will help us to perceive the many Blessings God bestows among us and to us. Just like Rebel, although we are not always on our best behavior and do at times make wrong decisions and face hardship as he does when he is caged, in the end we are loved very much by our loving God, who is our brother, our sister, our mother and father and friend, God who is our family and who awaits to welcome us into the homes He has prepared for us to dwell in His presence forever.

And now to God be Glory, Majesty, Honor and Praise, forever and forever.

Amen.