

## 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time- Year C 2007 LK 12:35-40

1. If you have ever dealt with an alcoholic.
  - a. You'll understand what I am talking about
2. If you have known a drunk who breaks things,
  - a. well things can be replaced.
3. If you have known a drunk who is physically violent,
  - a. well as sad as it can be, the police and the courts can see to it that this person never comes close enough to you to be violent again.
4. But anyone who has ever dealt with an alcoholic knows that the physical violence is not the most damaging;
  - a. for there is another type of damage,
    - i. a damage that isn't as readily visible as broken things or broken bones;
    - ii. but it takes far longer to heal . . .and in some cases it never does.
  - b. And that is the psychological damage that comes from loving an alcoholic.
5. My Father was an alcoholic.
  - a. And what that meant was that he would praise me for things when he was sober, that he would ridicule when drunk.
  - b. He would give me things when he was sober, and then demand to know why I had them when he was drunk.
  - c. He would be kind and fair when he was sober, but would rage and scream and even hit when he was drunk.
    - i. And as a child this taught me that love was inconsistent.
    - ii. that love meant hurting someone one moment and praising them the next;
    - iii. it meant saying one thing one moment and the opposite the next;
    - iv. It meant promising to be faithful one moment and being unfaithful the next.
6. As a result I had a hard time loving him
  - a. And also a hard time loving others;
    - i. My family, friends, and even God.
  - b. For if love is so inconsistent, I reasoned, how can we trust anyone's love - even God's?
7. It is a question The people of Israel would have asked, again and a gain and again throughout their long and broken history.
  - a. For at the start of that history they had been promised by God that they were loved by God; protected by God And that God would always be with them.
8. This morning's first reading looks back to that seminal moment in Israel's history, when God saved them from slavery in Egypt on the night of Passover,
  - (1) recasting the Passover in terms of God' faithfulness to Israel,
  - (2) Thus using it to proclaim that God's love is consistent.
  - ii. And yet this reading was written centuries after the Passover;
    - (1) centuries in which

- iii. God would praise Israel for being good,
      - (1) and then punish them for being bad
    - iv. God would bless them for their faithfulness with riches one moment;
      - (1) And then punish them for being unfaithful the next
    - v. God would proclaim his love for his daughter Israel one moment,
      - (1) and then call her a whore the next.
  - b. Where was God's constant love then?
- 9. And those first Christians who followed Jesus,
  - a. did so because they believed they had found God in him
    - i. a God who was loving
      - (1) when the Law demanded guilt
    - ii. A God who was forgiving
      - (1) when the law required punishment
    - iii. A God who loved Jesus even in the moment of his death so much that the resurrection of Jesus because the ultimate promise of God's faithful love; both for Jesus and for all those who followed him.
  - b. And yet those Christians for whom the Gospel of Luke had been written
    - (1) had watched some ten years previously as the Romans came and attacked Jerusalem, destroying God's holy city and burning God's temple.
    - (2) God may have loved Israel like the wisdom of Solomon and the resurrection of Jesus promised
    - (3) But in these moments of destruction and conquest,
    - (4) violence and death
    - ii. Where was God's consistent love then?
- 10. It is a question that begs an answer, and unfortunately all too often, no answer is given.
  - a. however, even as the Wisdom of Solomon sought to give an answer by looking to the past
  - b. Jesus sought to give an answer by looking to the future;
    - i. The fancy theological word for what Jesus does is called eschatology
    - ii. but we really don't need to know the word;
      - (1) we all recognize it when we hear it.
    - iii. We hear it in Jesus' words to his disciples today where he tells them to be ready - Why? God is coming.
      - (1) And when God comes God, who should be served as the master will serve those who are ready and waiting for him like a servant.
      - (2) It is the promise that is made again and again and again, to Israel through the prophets and to the disciples through Jesus,
    - iv. That even though it seems that They have been abandoned by God,
    - v. And that God's promise or protection has been broken and that God's love is inconsistent,
      - (1) God is not destroying them God is the one who is protecting them

- (2) That God has not stopped loving them; God still does.
  - (3) And that God has not abandoned them, no God is still with them, and will continue to be.
- 11. Such promises can be difficult to hear from the mouth of an abusive parent.
  - a. It can seem to be just one more promise, made to be broken.
- 12. And yet, maybe that is because there is a difference between God and our earthly fathers and mothers that we do not take into account.
  - a. My father died of his alcoholism in May of 1998.
  - b. He was unconscious the last few days of his life.
    - i. On the night before he died, when it came time to leave the hospital,
    - ii. I bent over, kissed his forehead and said, Good night dad, I love you.
      - (1) and out of the clear blue he spoke and said “love you too son.”
  - c. Now not everyone gets that kind of response of course.
    - i. But for me, in the days and weeks after his death,
    - ii. I began to see in those last words of my father
      - (1) the depth and the constancy of his love for me.
  - d. It was just that he was weak - and his addiction was so strong.
- 13. *That* is the difference.
  - a. For the author of this morning’s first reading saw
    - i. in the Passover celebration of the people of Israel,
      - (1) broken by slavery in Egypt;
  - b. And those first Christians saw
    - i. in the resurrection of a man
      - (1) broken on the cross
  - c. a God who is strong -
    - i. so strong that God could use our broken world,
    - ii. our broken families
    - iii. and even our broken hearts,
      - (1) not to reject and punish us,
      - (2) but to offer us the opportunity to return to God.
- 14. That is why Jesus promises his disciples
  - a. that even in the fact of persecution and death,
  - b. God is coming to fulfil God’s promises;
    - i. thus they must stay awake;
      - (1) so that they will recognize what is happening for what it truly is.
  - c. the actions of a God who is with us always,
    - i. pulling forgiveness out of guilt,
    - ii. Love out of judgment
    - iii. life out of death.