

4th Sunday of Lent - B

When the civil war was coming to an end someone asked Abraham Lincoln how he was going to deal with the south that had rebelled. He answered "I'm going to treat them as if they had never been away"
No Revenge – No "Get Even" – Rather, Compassion & Forgiveness

That's the story of today's readings

II Chron is written at the end of the Babylonian exile of the Jews.

Jews had lived sinful lives – they'd embraced religions of other nations

They had erected shrines to foreign gods – accepted their traditions and feasts

- Temple prostitutes, Child sacrifice, "Practicing all the abominations of the nations and polluting the Lord's temple"
- So God sent prophet, "Early and often the Lord sent His messengers to them, for He had compassion on his people"
- "But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His warnings, and scoffed at His prophets"
AND SO – The Babylonian Exile – they chose to reject God & they got it
- 70 years in captivity UNTIL Cyrus King of Persia conquers Babylon & sends them home. **WHY?**

EPHESIANS tells us WHY (it's the same reason Jesus came)

"God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love He had for us, even when we were dead in our transgression". *That's why they're returned from exile in II Chron., AND why Jesus came.*

NB – while we were dead in our sin – God sends a redeemer

THAT'S WHAT JESUS TEACHES NICODEMUS

"God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in Him might have eternal life"

God, who loves us, forgives us – **How well do we forgive others?**

How do we deal with those that offend US?

Revenge or Justice

OR something completely different – compassion, & forgiveness

Lincoln, who had lived through a devastating war – forgave the south.

The man that asked how he'd treat the south didn't expect the answer he got.

When I worked in Boston once I worked in a skyscraper and the elevator broke down

I told the secretary to call the elevator mechanic and I yelled through the open door to the man stuck between floors not to worry, that we'd called the elevator mechanic.

He replied "I am the elevator mechanic".

- He was the mechanic and he couldn't get himself out of trouble
- WE cannot get ourselves out of the grip of sin without Jesus.
- We're helpless without the compassion of God.
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The people of II Chron receive God's compassion.

The EPHESIANS hear about God's compassion.

Jesus teaches Nicodemus about God's compassion.

WHERE IS OUR COMPASSION BRO/SIS/PARENT/CHILD/OTHERS → welcome to Lent

There's a lesson for us here – If God shows mercy

welcome to sacrifice

If God shows compassion – He is being an example for US

(we may want justice for being wronged

Mercy triumphs over revenge / over justice

but only forgiveness

We know the compassion of God is our salvation

brings healing)

COMPASSION = WOMB ---- God's mercy is that intimate

It's that personal – and it's all ours