

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, December 11, 2016

Third Sunday of Advent

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

JUDGMENTAL

If we were called "judgmental," we would probably not consider it a compliment. Judgmental people are usually seen as overcritical and all too ready to find fault with others.

Yet if we are honest, we all are judgmental in the sense that we all have opinions about other people. Those opinions are affected by our biases, our expectations, and our personal experiences. That explains why everyone does not arrive at the same judgment.

For example, if a group of students were asked to judge one of their teachers, their evaluations would not be the same. Students who got an "A" might say the teacher was excellent while those given a "C" might say the teacher was second-rate. Those who liked the teacher's personality and point of view might give the teacher a positive rating while those who disliked the teacher and were critical of that teacher's opinions might give him or her a negative score.

Our judgments about others are based on our personal criteria and standards more than by objective and measurable norms.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 11:2-11), John the Baptist is re-evaluating his judgment of Jesus. When John first saw Jesus he had pointed him out and exclaimed "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Now John was not so sure if the one he had baptized in the Jordan River was truly the promised Messiah. Jesus was not acting as John had expected the Messiah to act. Jesus was not the passionate, powerful, revolutionary Messiah John had anticipated. The one, as John said in last Sunday's Gospel, who would "gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn in unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:12) So from his place of imprisonment, John sends his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"

In reply to those sent by John, Jesus says "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them."

John the Baptist was judging Jesus according to his hopes and expectations and not according to the understanding Jesus had of his mission.

What John the Baptist did is something we may do ourselves. We judge Jesus, we judge God according to our standards and expectations.

We expect God to bless those who follow the Gospel, yet bad things happen to good and holy people. We expect God to answer our prayers for our seriously ill relatives and friends, yet diseases progress and death comes. We expect God's kingdom of love and peace to come into

our world, yet sin and evil seem ever more prevalent. We expect God to surround his people with his love and care, but often we feel abandoned and on our own.

When God does not live up to our expectations, we start judging God as less than a loving Father. We start questioning Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"

As John the Baptist learned, the Lord acts according to his ways, not ours. God is not required to meet the expectations of his creatures!

© 2016 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski