

February 28, 2016 Third Sunday in Lent: Looking into the Lenten Blues

Native American Wisdom:

An old Cherokee chief was teaching his grandson about life...

"A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy.

"It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves.

"One is evil - he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and self-doubt.

"The other is good - he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, sympathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.

"This same fight is going on inside you - and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather,

"Which wolf will win?"

The old chief simply replied,

"The one you feed."

What happens when deep down we link disaster, death or destruction with **God's** will?

Somehow we sanctify violence and visit it upon ourselves and our loved ones.

We feed the wrong wolf.

What happens when we connect personal failure or frustration with divine punishment?

Somehow we judge ourselves and others too quickly and too harshly.

We feed the wrong wolf.

What happens when we see our inner suffering or dissatisfaction or angst as a sign of divine displeasure?

Somehow we wallow in self-pity and/or self-rejection.

We feed the wrong wolf.

What happens when we feed the wrong wolf?

We get anxious. We stop thriving. We worry, "what's next?"

We shut down. We get the blues.

And we feel far away from **God**, and everyone else for that matter.

Something like this is going on in our Gospel lesson. A crowd of dispirited people come to **Jesus** with a tale of woe, a story of death, desecration and divine rejection. They want to share their angst. They want to commiserate with **Jesus**.

In the brutality of being killed by the Romans, their fellow Galileans own blood had been mixed with the blood of the animals they were sacrificing in the temple. This was an abomination; a terrible violation of the religious system. The blood of the sacrificed covered your sin, paid the price in your place. The life blood of the sacrificer mingled with the blood of the sacrificed undid everything. It would be something like you and I drinking real human blood as part of our communion service. The people assumed these victims were now abominations, rejected and cut off from **God** for what had happened, even though on the surface it didn't appear to be their fault.

Jesus can't believe his ears.

How can they sanctify violence so easily?

How can they judge so quickly and harshly?

How can they wallow in self-pity so readily?

How can they feed the wrong wolf so willingly?

So **Jesus challenges them**. He conjures up a story to snap them out of it.

Step one: Have the listeners identify with the owner coming to investigate a fruit tree in his yard.

Step two: Have the owner do something utterly against the religious law, like demanding a harvest after three years when only the first fruits for sacrifice could be harvested in the fourth year, and no harvest for profit could be made until the fifth year. Go even further and have the owner want to destroy the whole enterprise, which is directly against **Gods** law in the first place.

Step Three: Present a gardener who begs the owner to repent: To give the tree the time it deserves, and **God** demands. This gardener is not too proud to get his hands dirty with the dung that will enrich the situation. He will do what it takes to nudge the tree to produce its first fruits in the fourth year.

So, which person's actions is most like **God's** in this story?

Which wolf should be fed?

Application for Today

Lent is the time to feed the wolf
who nurtures life and lifts us out of the blues.

Meditation

Relax and follow your breathing inward to that prayerful place.
Recall our gospel story. The fruit tree, the owner and the gardener.
Recognize how each one just happens to be active in each of us.

First the unproductive fruit tree

We know the undeveloped parts of ourselves—the barren relationships,
the still fruitless aspect of own lives.

See it, feel it, hear it.

Second the greedy, demanding, judgemental owner

We know the self-abusive part of us, that demands the fruits of our endeavours
before they are ready,
the judging part of us that says, “What’s wrong with you?” “Cut your losses.”

See it, feel it, hear it.

Finally the caregiver gardener

who knows when the time is right, who knows what to do if given a chance.
We know the *practical compassion* part of us
that isn't afraid to roll up our sleeves, dig in, and make a difference.

See it, feel it, hear it.

Now realize that God understands all three aspects of our lives.

God loves all three.

Feel God nudging the undeveloped part of you.

Hear God correcting the judgemental part of you.

See God feeding the caregiving compassionate part of you.

Open up to **God** helping you feed the *good wolf* within you and others.

See it, feel it, hear it.

Now let us pray as **Jesus** taught us saying....