



Homiletic Notes — Sunday, November 16

A resource from *The Church Council on Justice and Corrections*

www.ccjc.ca

Roman Catholic Lectionary:

Proverbs 31.10-13, 16-18, 20, 26, 28-31++
 Ps 128.1-2, 3, 4-5 (R.1)
 1 Thessalonians 5.1-6
 Matthew 25.14-30 or 25.14-15, 19-21

Revised Common Lectionary:

Judges 4:1-7 or Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18
 Ps 123 or Ps 90:1-8. (9-11), 12
 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
 Matthew 25:14-30

Matthew 25.14-30

Jesus lived the kingdom “on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus entrusts us, his disciples, to also live “on earth as it is in heaven.” We do this with “kingdom talents” –hope, forgiveness, compassion, reconciliation, faith and love – offered in service for others, not buried!

Broken and hurting relationships are restored by these God-given “kingdom talents.” And, in *Restorative Justice Week*, we are reminded that “kingdom talents” increase when they are given in the compassionate service of victims, offenders, their families and hurting communities. Jesus in his compassionate heart reaches out healing and restoring “on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus invites us to do similarly.

Judges 4:1-7

While the violence of going to battle is problematic and concerning, there is a common biblical theme reflected in this reading:

The loving God of creation is providential... although created in the image of God, human beings do wrong with harmful and painful consequences...and God sees and responds with promise and blessing!

As in the story of Deborah, God hears the cries of those who are harmed and seeks to have fulfillment of a sacred and providential promise. Wherever people are hurting or being harmed God calls us as a people to support one another in a healing and providential justice for all.

“**Restorative Justice is...**an approach that views crime and conflict as harm done to people and relationships. It is a non-adversarial, non-retributive approach to justice that emphasizes healing in victims, accountability of offenders, and the involvement of citizens in creating healthier, safer communities.”

Don Head, Commissioner, Correctional Services Canada

Guiding Questions of Restorative Justice

1. **Who has been hurt and what are their needs?**
Focus on the harms and consequent needs of the victims, as well as the communities, and the offenders.
2. **Whose obligations are these?**
Address the obligations that result from those harms — the obligations of the offenders, as well as the communities and societies.
3. **Who has a stake in this situation?**
Involve those with a legitimate stake in the situation, including victims, offenders, community members and society..
4. **What is the appropriate process to involve stakeholders in an effort to put things right?**
Use inclusive, collaborative processes in seeking to put right the wrongs.

Howard Zehr, The Little Book of Restorative Justice, p32, 38

Originally “Prisoners’ Week” in 1975 to encourage Christian communities to pray for and respond to the needs of prisoners. “Restorative Justice Week” is inclusive of faith communities and the needs of prisoners, victims, their families and community.



Homiletic Notes — Sunday, November 23

A resource from *The Church Council on Justice and Corrections*

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Roman Catholic Lectionary:

Ezekiel 34.11-12, 15-17
 Ps 23.1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 (R.1)
 1 Corinthians 15.20-26, 28
 Matthew 25.31-46

Revised Common Lectionary:

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24
 Ps 100 or Ps 95:1-7a
 Ephesians 1:15-23
 Matthew 25:31-46

Matthew 25.31-46

The Judgment of the Nations (Matthew 25:31-46) is a powerful parable for the final Sunday of the Liturgical Year and the closing Sunday of Restorative Justice Week.

All nations are reminded how practical and specific is the call of discipleship: “I say to you, whatever you did to the least of mine, you did for me.” “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me...in prison and you visited me.”

Discipleship is a reaching out, a visiting, to offer “a cup of water” or “bread of life” or “healing touch” to the sick, the hurting, the imprisoned.

Ezekiel 34.11-12, 15-17

When there is a wrong or a crime people are hurting — victims, offenders, their families, and the community. There are feelings of being lost, injured, sick and having strayed. Prophet Ezekiel reminds us that God notices “his scattered sheep when it was cloudy and dark.” And, God “finds himself among his scattered sheep.” From God’s heart there is a promise to “give them rest” and to “seek out, bring back, and heal.” The invitation from God’s heart to our hearts is that we also seek out and find ourselves among victims, offenders, and their families.

This is also a call for faith communities, families, neighborhoods and communities to live “a culture of restorative justice.” The judgment of the nations is a call for faith communities, marriages and families, neighborhoods and communities to actually live “a culture of restorative justice.”

The effects of prison visitation on recidivism

“Using multiple measures of visitation (any visit, total number of visits, visits per month, timing of visits, and number of individual visitors) and recidivism...the study found that **visitation significantly decreased the risk of recidivism**, a result that was robust across all of the Cox regression models that were estimated...”

“The findings suggest that revising prison visitation policies to make them more ‘visitor friendly’ could yield public safety benefits by helping offenders establish a continuum of social support from prison to the community”

Centre for Justice and Reconciliation, 2012

Restorative Justice is a Satisfying Justice

“What is called for is no less than a *fundamental shift in direction* to change the way we see the whole picture of what justice is about. That big picture, some communities are discovering, is one with a new more positive purpose, an overall **healing purpose**, for victims and communities as well as offenders and their families.” *Satisfying Justice, CCJC, 1996 p..XVIII*

“...the communication process and community mediation possibilities that **these models [of restorative justice] provide give an opportunity for victims** to be supported, **for offenders** to get some important messages in a safe environment **and for members of the community** to work at the problems of living together which the offence brings to light.”

Satisfying Justice, CCJC, 1996, p.XVII

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