

Daily Reflection on Scripture
Week of February 19
Parables Part 5 –
The Parable of Abba Peomen



Sunday, February 19, 2017

And it came to pass that a disciple came to Abba Poemen to ask him a question: "Abba (which means father) When a brother falls asleep in Common Prayer should I wake him and report him to the Abbot? What do you do when a brother falls asleep?"

Abba Poemen thought very hard and answered the brother: "When a brother falls asleep in Common Prayer I lower my voice so that I don't disturb him and pray he has a good rest."

The disciple was shocked by this answer because it was a grave sin to fall asleep during prayer.

He dared to ask another question: "But Abba Poemen, falling asleep in prayer is a sin; what do you say to God when he asks you why you let the brother sleep?"

Abba Poemen thought again and responded: I remind my Jesus that he told me to take the plank out of my eye first, before I attempt to remove the splinter from my brother's eye."

The disciple quickly understood, bowed to Abba Poemen and walked backwards out of the room out of respect for his great teacher.

Reflection: This past Sunday we looked at two messages from this parable of the Desert Fathers and Mothers: one was the obvious one of not judging others and the second was the importance to all of us in finding people to talk to about our walk with Jesus, people who also are seeking truth in their walk. This week we will explore these ideas in the Daily Reflections by looking at one part of this parable each day. Here Abba Poemen is saying 'judge not that ye' be not judged' ...pretty straight teaching. And he is reminding the disciple of the need for compassion for the sleeping brother.

Sacred Pause: Seek to forgive yourself for judging; and judge not that ye' be not judged. Be intentional about when you are judging...and seek relief from the judgement for both the judged and judger.

Monday, February 20, 2017

And it came to pass that a disciple came to Abba Poemen to ask him a question.

Reflection: The disciple in our story is visiting the great Abba (which means father) to ask for guidance in his walk with Jesus. Since the beginning of the church some have gone to others to seek guidance. The person we seek doesn't have to be 'official' or even more wise than us. Sometimes just having a conversation about something we are struggling with can help us get clarity and guidance. At Crossroads we do this individually, in small group, in medium sized groups and in the larger group of Sunday morning worship.

Sacred Pause: Do you have someone in your life you can talk about God with? Who provides the most guidance for you in your search for meaning and authenticity?

Tuesday, February 21, 2017

The Disciple asked: "Abba (which means Father) when a brother falls asleep in Common Prayer should I wake him and report him to the Abbot? What do you do when a brother falls asleep?"

Reflection: The disciple might be asking the Abba about this because he wants to know. He might also be asking to either catch the Abba in a falsehood or to get his fellow brother in trouble. Our motive for some of our judgements has a lot to do with whether we are 'judging' in the way Jesus warned us. Some judgements are necessary. When they are designed to hurt someone else directly or indirectly they are seldom necessary.

Sacred Pause: It's important that we are careful about even expressing an opinion if it hurts another; opinions are necessary to life, expressing them to hurt is contrary to our way.

Wednesday, February 22, 2017

Abba Poemen thought very hard and answered the brother: "When a brother falls asleep in Common Prayer I lower my voice so that I don't disturb him and pray he has a good rest."

Reflection: Abba Poemen is giving us two lessons in this simple response to the brother, one of compassion for the sleeping brother and the other teaching the questioning brother though not giving an answer he expected. As with much spiritual direction more than one lesson can be learned from a simple teaching. We shall see tomorrow how the brother responds to this from Abba Poemen.

Sacred Pause: Our lack of judgement is not only a right thing to do it, it is compassionate many times. And certainly, it is loving when the judgement is withheld rather than hurt another.

Thursday, February 23, 2017

"Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom for the future." Proverbs 19:20 (NRSV)

The disciple was shocked by this answer because it was a grave sin to fall asleep during prayer. He dared to ask another question: "But Abba Poemen, falling asleep in prayer is a sin; what do you say to God when he asks you why you let the brother sleep?"

Reflection: Sometimes even when we are caught up short and reminded we are judging we worry that to ask another question would compound our judgement. But questions are the currency of faith so the disciple is simply continuing the conversation and asking the Abba for clarity. The Abba soon reminds him of Jesus' love and compassion.

Sacred Pause: Our judging mind sometimes can't give up even when we realize we have been wrong in the judging. Be intentional and give up judgement.

Friday, February 24, 2017

Abba Poemen thought again and responded: I remind my Jesus that he told me to take the plank out of my eye first, before I attempt to remove the splinter from my brother's eye."

Reflection: 'Gotcha!' Again, the great teacher teaches with beautiful, Christ-like insight. 'Judge not that ye be not judged' he says to the disciple. Pretty hard to argue with something Jesus was unequivocal about, isn't it? Notice how our great teacher Abba Poemen has slowly but surely in our reflections all week provided teaching without judging himself.

Sacred Pause: That plank in your eye can be removed especially with the help of a great Abba or maybe just a friend who is willing to listen without judging you.

Saturday, February 25, 2017

The disciple quickly understood, bowed to Abba Poemen and walked backwards out of the room out of respect for his great teacher.

Reflection: We can almost see the light bulb go off for our disciple brother in the story, can't we? Suddenly he realizes that Abba Poemen is right even though what he says he is to do seems to flaunt the rules of the monastery. We wonder if as he returns to his room in the monastery he doesn't also realize how important it was to ask the question and to see the advice. And how wise the great Abba Poemen is and will be for him in the future.

Sacred Pause: From now on let us be intentional about identifying when we are judging (knowing it's impossible to completely eliminate it) and seek to prevent judgement in the future. And let us understand the need for community, for others in our walk to help us explore the difficult and simple questions we face following Jesus.