

## 2018 – Year B - 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday – Lent

A couple of weeks ago, on Ash Wednesday, as you were receiving ashes on your forehead you might have heard “Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.” Sin is something that we are all aware of. Growing up in the Catholic tradition we have heard that sins can be either less serious or more serious. Whether a particular sin falls into either category depends on a variety of factors, such as: who is affected, how they are affected, the level of seriousness of the action and how much the person committing the sin knows about what they are doing. The idea of sin goes much further beyond whether it is or isn’t serious.

The reality of sin is that it represents the evil that is in the world. Whether or not you choose to believe in a person called the Devil or Satan, the reality is that evil exists in the world. In the very beginning of the Bible, when the writers were try to explain to the people of their day how the world came to be in its present condition, evil was discussed in the very second chapter of the Book of Genesis.

The story in Genesis tells how the first couple, Adam and Eve, was tricked by the serpent into eating from a certain tree against God’s command. The story is meant to let people know that our human condition is prone to sinning because we are not always willing to follow where God is leading us.

The story of Adam and Eve is followed in quick succession by a variety of other stories about how people turn away from God: Cain kills his brother Abel, the Tower of Babel is constructed so people can reach heaven, the people rebel against God, God has Noah build the ark and the

flood follows. So many stories of the evil in the world, and we are just in the first book of the Bible.

The Bible and other written history have documented the variety of evils that man has inflicted on their fellow men. Wars and violence are both something that have been a scourge throughout history. Unfortunately we don't have to go far back into history to find how evil has impacted the world.

A couple of weeks ago, in Parkland, Florida, the students and teachers of Stoneman Douglas High School looked into the face of evil. Today, in Syria, the government is attacking another of its cities and killing more of its citizens. In Burma/Myanmar, the Muslim minority Rohingya have experienced ethnic cleansing and genocide. Throughout the United States an epidemic of opioid abuse has left a trail of death. Each of these examples shows that evil is alive through the sins that people are inflicting upon themselves and others.

Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel, the good news. Jesus tells us that the good news is "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son." After everything that had occurred throughout human history, God's love for his creation remained so great. God then made the choice to have his own Son become a lowly human person so that people would turn away from the evil that they had committed, and were continuing to commit. It is almost like God was giving the human race one more chance to turn away from sin.

Jesus reminds us that failure to turn away from evil is a choice. He likens evil to being in the darkness. God's truth is the light that guides us to true happiness. When we live in the light of God's truth and love we can recognize the false allure that evil presents to us. Jesus tells us that

when we fail to live in God's light, but instead choose the darkness of evil, that Jesus will not condemn us, because we condemn ourselves by our actions.

God's light in the world is Jesus. When we accept to live in the light of Jesus we are placing our faith and hope in his word that God loves us. In Jesus' light the sin and evil that exist in the world are shown to be an illusion of the supposed power of the Devil or Satan. Evil and sin only exist where people reject the light of Jesus and call down upon themselves condemnation. This is not what God wants for his creation, but some people will always refuse to follow the God who loves them.

Here, at the halfway point of Lent, we are called to reflect on where we are in our faith life. Have we chosen to live in the light of God's love that is Jesus and make room in our hearts for him? Do we want to live in the light of God's love that is Jesus and come to eternal life with God in heaven? Do we want to reject the evil and sin in the world and work toward a world where God's peace reigns?

When faced with evil the students of Stoneman Douglas High School, their parents and their teachers could have become fearful and turned away from the God who loves them unconditionally. They could have let the evil they experienced cause them to feel abandoned. Instead they have chosen to stand against evil and fight for the right to live their lives without fear. They have chosen to live in the light of Jesus and the truth that he brings to all people. Can we go and do the same?