6 A

MDP of God

A man worked in a post office. His job was to process all mail that had illegible addresses. One day a letter came to his desk, *addressed in a shaky handwriting* **to God.** He thought, "I better open this one and see what it's all about." So he opened it and it read:

"Dear God, I am an 83 year old widow living on a very small pension. Yesterday someone stole my purse. It had a hundred dollars in it which was all the money I had until my next pension check." "Next Sunday is Easter, and I had invited two of my friends over for dinner. Without that money, I have nothing to buy food with." "I have no family to turn to, and you are my only hope. Can you please help me?"

*The postal worker was touched*, and went around showing the letter to all the other postal workers at their little post office. Each of them dug into their wallet and came up with a few dollars. By the time he made the rounds, he had collected 96 dollars, which they put into an envelope and sent over to this elderly woman. *The rest of the day, all the workers felt a warm glow thinking of the nice thing they had done.* Easter came and went, and a few days later came another letter from the old lady to God. All the workers at the Post Office gathered around while the letter was opened.
It read:

"Dear God, How can I ever thank you enough for what you did for me?" "Because of your generosity, I was able to fix a lovely dinner for my friends. We had a very nice day, and I told my friends of your wonderful gift. " "By the way, there was 4 dollars missing. **It was no doubt those thieving crooks at the post office."**
 *Sometimes when we do good—we don’t get any credit* ---**here, in this life**

My dear friends—in our psalm today we prayed, “Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord”

Which means when we follow the law of the Lord—**that God won’t forget**—*that God will bless us—that God will lead us to a deeper relationship with Him*—which of course is an incredible gift

It doesn’t mean that people around us will always give us credit—it doesn’t mean that people around us will be grateful for our sacrifices—it doesn’t mean that we’ll get a lot of recognition here and now when we deny ourselves to obey God’s commandments

 In fact many in our world today—when we obey God will think us foolish

And even though our 1st reading today from Sirach tells us, “***Immense is the wisdom of the Lord*”**;--the truth is when we trust in God’s Wisdom people will think that we’re naive—that we’re foolish—that we’ll miss out on all the fun in life

But I ask you to truly reflect on the words of our psalm today—and my friends I ask you to take these words to heart—they’re taken from psalm 119 which is a very long psalm—and parts of this psalm are in the breviary for midday prayer just about every day

The breviary contains the prayers that priests and nuns and deacons pray every day:---so what I’m about to read to you is a very brief part of psalm 119:

 **Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord! (that was our response—but it goes on)**
*Blessed are they whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the LORD.
Blessed are they who observe his decrees,
who seek him with all their heart.*
*You have commanded that your precepts
be diligently kept.
Oh, that I might be firm in the ways
of keeping your statutes!*
*Be good to your servant, that I may live
and keep your words.
Open my eyes, that I may consider
the wonders of your law.*
*Instruct me, O LORD, in the way of your statutes,
that I may exactly observe them.
Give me discernment, that I may observe your law
and keep it with all my heart.*

Notice the attitude of the psalmist—he sees God’s laws as a great gift—as something that leads to Wisdom

 Compare that attitude with the attitude of our culture

Many in our culture today would describe the laws of God like that little old lady in the story I began with described the post office workers—the attitude of many is “God is just trying to rob you of fun— the bible and the Church are like thieves robbing you of joy and good times---*you’ll be so much better off if you ignore the bible—if you ignore the Church—if you ignore God’s so called word”*

**“Follow your feelings**—**that’s the way to true happiness”**

My friends—it seems to me we can relate to God in one of three ways

The 1st way we can relate to God is to see Him as a punishing tyrant—that unfortunately is how many Catholics have related to God through the centuries

Many who see God this way—obey Him—which is a very good thing—but they obey Him *not out of love*—**but only out of fear**

The attitude is, “mean old God will send me to hell if I do this—so I won’t do it—I’ll obey His stupid commandments”

Now living faith in that way will get a person to heaven—because they are obeying God who is our ultimate judge---but it doesn’t bring joy in life

That’s why we have people who practice their faith---who are sour—miserable—unhappy people

Rather than seeing themselves as a son or daughter of a loving Father—they see themselves as servants who have to obey or else

The 2nd way we can relate to God is the way many people today relate to God

Many see God as almost a senile old man who doesn’t know what He’s talking about---He has all these so called commandments—but they’re from a long time ago—and they don’t count anymore—so when we come before God He’s of course going to bring us to heaven---because His commandments don’t matter—and He’s just a nice old man who will bring everyone into heaven

That attitude is of course a denial of the true God---Jesus in today’s gospel told us:

Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away,
not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter
will pass from the law,
until all things have taken place.
Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments
and teaches others to do so
will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.
But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments
will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses
that of the scribes and Pharisees,
**you will not enter the kingdom of heaven**. So this 2nd way—puts someone’s salvation at great risk

The 3rd way we can relate to God—is the way our readings today point us too—and that’s God is an all wise and all loving Father

And that God in His great love has given us His commands to guide us through all the hurdles of life

That God’s commands are there to keep us from hurting ourselves and hurting others

So God in His love gives us His laws so that we don’t have to live with regret—we don’t have to live with knowing that we’ve used and hurt others

*Now because of our fallen human nature—***obeying God’s Wisdom won’t be easy**

Living by God’s Wisdom will at times feel like we have to deny ourselves pleasures

 Living by God’s Wisdom will mean that we will live with a lot of sacrifice

But we’ll choose to deny ourselves because we trust God’s Wisdom

We’ll choose to make sacrifices necessary *because we love God* **and want to please God**

So my friends—I need to ask you—how do you relate to God

 Is He to you a tyrant you have to obey—or else

Is He to you a senile old man whose laws don’t matter--- where you’re going to do what you want to do no matter what His laws say---and God will just have to accept me the way I am

I do want to point out my friends—that in the Old Testament—the biggest punishment that God gave His people is when He—and I quote, *“When He left them to their own devices”*

What does that mean? That’s when God basically says, “You don’t want to trust me. You don’t love me enough to follow My Wisdom? –*Then do it your way!”*

“Your way will lead to heartache and pain--Your way will lead to regret--Your way will lead to disaster---*but do it your way*”

*That’s really where many in our country are today*

But my friends—when we obey God—when we trust God—when we make what appears to be sacrifices to please God---others might not give us credit—but God knows our hearts-*I want to leave you with the words of our psalm today once again*

This again is from psalm 119—it’s a beautiful psalm and I’d encourage you to pray it often---as I said—a part of this psalm appears just about everyday in the prayers that priests, sisters and deacons pray:

**Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord! (that was our response—but it goes on)**
*Blessed are they whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the LORD.
Blessed are they who observe his decrees,
who seek him with all their heart.*
*You have commanded that your precepts
be diligently kept.
Oh, that I might be firm in the ways
of keeping your statutes!*
*Be good to your servant, that I may live
and keep your words.
Open my eyes, that I may consider
the wonders of your law.*
*Instruct me, O LORD, in the way of your statutes,
that I may exactly observe them.
Give me discernment, that I may observe your law
and keep it with all my heart.* Amen? Amen