

Reflection Thursday Week 19 2020

We have had troublesome readings of late that certainly challenge the way we think about God, about the consequences of sin, the rejection of evil, of injustice, and the misuse of power. Jesus calls us not only to seek forgiveness but to show forgiveness; to be reconcilers like God.

One day, a sage gave his disciple an empty sack and a bag of potatoes. *"Think of all the people who have done or said something against you in the recent past, especially those you cannot forgive."* The disciple produced quite a few names, and soon his sack was heavy with potatoes. *"Carry the sack with you wherever you go for a week,"* said the sage. At first, the disciple thought nothing of it. Carrying the sack was not particularly difficult. But after a while, it became more of a burden. It hindered his movements and required more effort to carry as time passed. After a few days, the sack began to smell. The potatoes gave off a ripe old pong. Not only were they increasingly inconvenient to carry, they were becoming rather unpleasant. After a week, the sage asked for his thoughts. **Disciple:** *"When we are unable to forgive others, we carry negative feelings with us everywhere, much like these potatoes. That negativity becomes a burden to us and, after a while, it festers."* **Sage:** *"Yes, that's exactly what happens when one holds a grudge. So, how can we lighten the load?"* **Disciple:** *"We must strive to forgive."* **Sage:** *"Forgiving someone is the equivalent of removing a potato from the sack. How many of your transgressors are you able to forgive?"* **Disciple:** *"After much effort, I have been able to forgive all of them."* **Sage:** *"Very well, remove all the potatoes. Were there any other people who transgressed against you last week?"* The disciple admitted there were. Then he panicked, realising his empty sack was about to be refilled. **Disciple:** *"Master, if I continue like this, won't there always be potatoes in the sack week after week?"* **Sage:** *"Yes, as long as people speak or act against you in some way, you will always have potatoes."* **Disciple:** *"But Master, we can never control what others do. What can I do?"* **Sage:** *"Think about it. If the potatoes are negative feelings, then what is the sack?"* **Disciple:** *"The sack is that which allows me to hold on to the negativity. It is something within me that makes me dwell on feeling offended - my inflated sense of self-importance."* **Sage:** *"What will happen if you let go of it?"* **Disciple:** *"Then the things that people do or say against me no longer seem to be a major issue."* **Sage:** *"In that case, you won't have any potatoes for the sack. That means no more weight to carry around, and no more bad smells. True forgiveness is the conscious decision to not just remove some potatoes, but to relinquish the entire sack."* As Nelson Mandela said, *"Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies."* It is no wonder then that **Jesus forgives us our sins . . .**

I used to pray every night for a bicycle.

Then I realized the Lord doesn't work like that. So, I stole a bike and asked the Lord for forgiveness.