

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Worship God's Idea of God Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time Monday, June 20, 2016
8:15 AM **2 Kgs 17:5-8, 13-15a, 18;** Mt 7:1-5 (Jesus is really setting us on a path of self-improvement, self-reflection, self-observation, the goal of which is openness to transforming grace.)

In the first reading from the Second Book of Kings we have the story of the real crisis that took place in the **northern kingdom with its defeat and deportation in 721**. Now the evaluation written here was written by an author of the tribe of Judah, and it's extremely critical of the lives of people who were deported. It's as if, well, it's their fault; **they have not remained faithful to the covenant**. The covenant of course is this agreement between God and a people that offered them a very special relationship, but which required something special from them: first and foremost to worship God alone. That means **to worship God's idea of God, not their idea of God**. And then the **other commandments followed**: two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, all about respect. **But the respect is based on the truth who God really is**.

Now there was a failure to follow this. To what degree the people were blameworthy, we cannot evaluate. Jesus says here, "Do not judge." We can't judge them either, but we can see. We can see that **remaining faithful to a covenant is not easy**. In the 700s and 800s the people of Israel were drawn to a world of prosperity, wealth, success. And they believed that the world around them had the keys to the continuation of their prosperity and their wealth and their success, whereas God said, "I will prosper you if you follow me." Now that may be hard to take, but that was the promise. It's not really all about what you do and it's surely not about what the world says. **It's about my providence. I will care for you, but you have to honor me**, worship the true God the way God looks at God, not something else, something fictitious, something invented.

But we still have the same problem. Millions of people baptized into the Catholic faith have

walked away; they no longer identify with the faith. We cannot judge whether or not they are actually culpable. **Jesus says, “Stop judging, that you may not be judged,” so we don’t judge them, but we can observe they are gone.** Jesus says, “My Father is the vinedresser and he prunes away every barren branch.” Is that the proper interpretation of this phenomenon we see? Perhaps, we can’t judge for sure, but barren they seem to be. Jesus’ point in the gospel is, however, **we are not to be looking at other people and trying to correct them.** We are not even first and foremost supposed to be looking at the world and correcting it.

We are supposed to be **doing what God asks us to do, which is worshipping him first and foremost, and to conduct our lives in accord with the law that he has given us, which is written in our hearts.** It is a law being a human person to every other human person. It is being a just, good, and merciful man or woman, boy or girl, in all cases. And **“the measure we measure out to others will be measured back to us.”** So if we really want to thrive and be prosperous, **we just have to be very generous and very good, and that will be measured back to us.** And if we want to be forgiven our faults, whether we are really guilty of them or not, all we have to do is **be accepting and forgiving of everyone else’s failings and flaws,** whether or not they are actually blameworthy, since that would be a judgment if we said it was or wasn’t. So **Jesus is really setting us on a path of self-improvement, self-reflection, self-observation, the goal of which is openness to transforming grace.**