

Transform the Wicked Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time Friday, July 7, 2017
8:15 AM Gn 23:1-4, 19; 24:1-8, 62-67; **Mt 9:9-13** (Jesus looks at people as a work in progress.)

“I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

This story is an **introduction to a new way of looking at life**. For the Pharisees people were either righteous or unrighteous, good or evil, and they were going to stay that way. People who are good are to be rewarded and people who are evil are to be shunned and punished.

Jesus comes with a whole new view and it's twofold. First of all, no one is permanently either. **Jesus looks at people as a work in progress**; everyone is a work in progress. He wants to encourage all those that he meets to move in a godly direction. And if there are aspects of their lives that they are ashamed of, he urges them to leave them behind and **move on to a better way of living**. He does this because he believes that this is the Father calling all men and women to a **life with him. A life with God is a life of goodness and a life of love.**

It's clear that there are many human activities and human actions and human choices that exclude love. So **there is this need for repentance**, for a change of mind, a new way of looking at life. This is the new wine that needs new wineskins. It doesn't fit in the categories that the Pharisees had at hand. But being men of faith they were not willing to let go of their faith, of their categories. So that's the story on one level.

But then we could look on it even in a deeper level because **what is righteousness after all?** It isn't simply following the Law. The Law indicates what is righteous, but there is something more. **Righteousness is a matter of actually willing the good of others.** That's why Jesus reduces the whole Law to **“Love God and love your neighbor as yourself,”** because ultimately righteousness is a matter of willing the good of others as God wills the good of all.

So what is wickedness? **Wickedness is not willing the good of others, believing blindly that one could actually produce good for oneself and not for others at the same time.** This of course is not a true good. But Jesus is testifying to the fact that even those who are really and truly **wicked can change.** And in fact God is enabling them to change this very moment in his very ministry. **“Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do.”** Here is the physician to bring that healing forgiveness into the lives of even those who are wicked. This is a truth or a teaching that I’m afraid many Christians have never quite taken to, that the role of **the gospel is to transform even the wicked, not to punish them or constrain them**—that’s the work of Law, St. Paul talks about that—**but to transform them.** And it is possible. This is what our faith invites us to behold and to believe.