

**A Radical Change**    Saturday after Ash Wednesday    March 9, 2019    Is 58:9b-14;    **Lk 5:27-32**    (St. Frances of Rome, religious)    (God showed his true hand to his people and, therefore, was entitled to a certain sort of trust or confidence.)

**“The Pharisees and the scribes complained to his disciples.”**

Now this word complained actually is the word murmured, and there are traditions of murmuring in Scripture. **Whenever the people didn't like something they murmured.** So with Moses leading the people to the Promised Land there was a lot of murmuring. People didn't like the food. They didn't like the walk. They didn't like the heat. They didn't like the dryness, and so on. And so they are constantly murmuring, and God took offense at this murmuring because he took it as **a lack of trust. God expresses this belief in the Scriptures that through the signs he worked in freeing the people from bondage that he showed his true hand to his people and, therefore, was entitled to a certain sort of trust or confidence.** And when the people murmured it showed that, well, they didn't really trust him.

Trust is a big issue. It has been from the beginning in the garden of Eden. That was a whole issue of trust: do you trust in God or do you trust in yourself? Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is about **trusting yourself** and your own wisdom and your own capacity to decide and know what's best, **as opposed to listening to God and following the light that God gives.**

So here **Jesus** is the light who has come into the world, and lo and behold, he is being **accepted by tax collectors and sinners**, people who are really on the outside of the Law and they are basking, as it were, in the light, and they are learning from the light. Those who are appointed to be **custodians of the Law are murmuring**; they are complaining: this isn't the way it's supposed to be.

Now much of Jesus' mission was about announcing the need for **a radical change**, here called repentance. That's a word that's a little too weak. The Greek word is really *metanoia*, much more profound: **change of heart, new heart**, compared to pouring **new wine into new wineskins**. Now people liked to pour new wine into old wineskins because old wineskins didn't smell bad. They no longer smelled like goat or sheep. They smelled like wine. It sounds like a good deal. No, it was not a good deal because, although they didn't smell bad anymore, they also weren't strong anymore and you lose the wine. Jesus' point is you need something new.

After the controversy in Luke on fasting, Jesus is showing not a great deal of enthusiasm for fasting, although the Pharisees did and John the Baptist did and Mohammed did. Later on, the whole month of Ramadan was all about fasting. The Eastern mystics were fasting all the time and practicing all kinds of self-abnegation. Jesus' wasn't too keen on all that. After speaking about the bridegroom and so on, he said, "**No one puts a new patch of cloth on an old garment.**" That's a reference to fasting. **That's a reference to a lot of practices that don't get to the core of our problem, which is we need a new heart.** We just don't have to fix the old one. And that was the problem he had with the Law. The Law is good. He never really opposed the spirit of the Law or the intentionality of the Law. **It was good, but it was also limited, and he wasn't about limits.**

Jesus, after all, is the infinite love of God embodied in human flesh, and what he called people to was an unlimited—unlimited—**embrace of the divine, the love that has created us in the first place, the love that draws us into eternal communion.** And on the way, is the Law a help or not? Well you can decide that for yourself.