

Wait Until Your Father Gets Home

I remember when I was little that I looked forward to my Dad coming home from work. I would watch and wait and listen for the sound of his car, for the garage door opening. I would run to him and give him a hug and would follow him to his closet as he got changed from work clothes. But, I dreaded his arrival when I had been bad. “Just wait until your father gets home.” These are some of the most frightening words to a child. When I heard these words I knew I had done wrong, was guilty and ashamed and would be disciplined.

All during Lent we have talked about how we are on a spiritual journey in this life. That we were home with God in Paradise, that we fell away, and are separated from him by a curtain of sin. But also that we always have the chance before us to repent, to return home to him like the prodigal, and see our heavenly Father at home in the distance coming out to greet us.

But this week and last, on the Sundays of the Judge and Advent, we are asked to reflect very honestly about what our Father’s mood will be like when we do arrive home. Are we always mindful that how we behave in this life will make all the difference in how we respond to the words “wait until your father gets home”? Will we be excited to see Him, to share in his love and what good we have done, or will we cower in fear and guilt because we know we have done, we have been—wrong.

No, it’s not the most comfortable feeling for us to remember that Our Lord will come again and it’s even a less comfortable feeling to know that we will be judged. But as you know, a core belief of our faith, our creed is that there will be judgment to enter God’s kingdom. And even though it’s not comfortable that we will be judged, let’s not hide from it, let’s be smart. If we will be judged at some point, the smartest thing to do is to get to know the judge a bit beforehand. What is his record like? What does he value more than anything? What makes him happy and what makes him sad? This is the connection between last week’s Sunday of the Judge and this week’s Sunday of Advent. Like the old woman, we should bring our personal case, what we are grateful for, what we feel wronged by, what our sins and shortcomings are, before the judge (God) every day in prayer. If we see and talk to Him every day in prayer, it will be less frightening when we see him again in his Advent glory.

What is the judge (God) like? Remember that in Christianity, and only Christianity, truth was and is a person, Christ. We have not only heard what God says, we have some very good insight into who he is...Open your Bible, your Badarak book, your heart you will find out what he is like, and taking him to heart, we actually start to know and feel in a very real way what he loves and what he hates.

And how does the judge (God) want us to behave? We find out in our Advent reading when the Pharisees ask Jesus; "Which is the greatest commandment?" Out of the 600+ commandments in Jewish law, Jesus’ answer cuts down to two, the very heart of the matter.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." –Matt 22:37

The judgment we will face will not be about if you were a nice guy or girl, or if you gave a few dollars to a charity...or even if you went to church every week. The judgment will be based very simply on two criteria. Is your heart set on God and everything that He has asked of you; and do you serve your family, church, neighbor and enemy with Christian love?

My prayer is that we start to get to know our Father, our judge now—today. That we speak to him honestly about what we are now, and are open to all we can be with him. My prayer is that we begin today to work extra hard to follow Christ’s only two instructions, so that when Our Father gets home our hearts will not be anxious, but full of joy and anticipation for the wonderful things we have to show him; now and always.... Amen.