

Homily  
Friday of the 1<sup>st</sup> Week of Lent  
February 23, 2024

Try to imagine the infinite love of our God. Now try to imagine His infinite justice and mercy. Every sin I have ever committed from the time I was able to sin through today is covered by Jesus on His Cross. Every sin I will ever commit from today until I die is covered by Jesus on His Cross. Every sin ever committed by everyone on the face of this earth, from the tasting of the fruit until the end of time, every one of these is covered by Jesus on His Cross. That's the infinite love, justice and mercy of our God.

We, because of our finiteness, cannot overcome our infinite God. And all that sin, as horrible as it is, is only a speck compared with the joy and peace of eternity in heaven. And Jesus has prepared a place for us and will take us to Himself, for those who turn away from sin.

Ezekiel tells us that the one who turns away from sin and keeps God's statutes will live. But those righteous who turn from the path of virtue to do evil, his righteous deeds will not be remembered because he has broken faith and committed sin, and he will die. What hope is there for us? We have the Christ. We have the promise of salvation, if only we repent.

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us that he has come to call sinners. His message reaches the ears of those who humbly recognize their need for God. Yet his message also falls on the deaf ears of the Pharisees who think they are righteous because of the deeds they accomplish. The scribes and Pharisees unwittingly trusted in their fulfillment of the Law of Moses. They forgot, however, the heart of God's Law – that true holiness and righteousness are bound to the love of God and neighbor. That is why Jesus tells his disciples to surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. The condition for entry into the Kingdom is not the fulfillment of the Law of Moses, but child-like simplicity and humility, repentance from sin, with the grace merited for us by Christ.

We cannot do this on our own. If we were held accountable for our sins, we would never finish paying the price. If we do not show the same mercy to our neighbor that God shows us, we would, "not be released until you have paid the last penny." (Matthew 5:26b) This is the Lenten message, "Repent and believe in the Gospel."