

July 20, 2014 – 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A  
*Called to be like God*

Can you remember back to your high school literature or English classes?

I can remember where we had to read some of the old, old classics, like Greek tragedies or about the Trojan War in the Iliad?

From those readings I can recall some of the ancient Greek gods like Zeus, Athena, Apollo, Hermes, etc.

Some of these same characters pop up again and again ... like in movies such as: *Clash of the Titans; Percy Jackson & the Olympians ... The Lightning Thief (book and movie); Sea of Monsters*

If I were to characterize the Greek gods I would start with the word "fickle".

You never know what or when they will do something.

Another word to describe them would be "petty", all wrapped up in squabbles with the other ancient gods.

Each god typically had some weak points and was clearly not perfect!

I mention all this to give us a setting for the readings for this weekend. Our readings come from a time when the Jewish people were surrounded by the peoples of Greece, Rome, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, peoples who worshipped a whole array of different gods.

Our readings tell us about our God.

By the grace of God, the Jewish people were given insight into God, Yahweh, Adonai, Lord.

When Moses first came to know God, God simply introduced himself as "I am who am." (Exodus 3:14).

That was a fascinating insight into God - God is one.

Monotheism, that is, belief in a single God, is a prominent belief of the Jewish people, Christians and Muslims to this very day.

Our first reading today is from Wisdom, a book usually attributed to King Solomon, the son of King David.

King Solomon was noted for his wisdom and today's reading gives excellent evidence of that wisdom as he writes about our God.

He tells us in this reading:

"There is no god besides you."

"Your might [power, strength] is the source of justice." [righteousness]

"You judge with clemency." [mercy, leniency]

Let's concentrate on those three key traits of God:

- Power,
- Justice and
- Mercy.

While we certainly respect the power and justice of God, what we might most appreciate is God's mercy.

As King Solomon ends today's reading: "You gave your children ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins."

In Biblical times it was common that one offence could terminate a relationship and there would be no chance for reconciliation.

That was

- not just for an individual and a god,
- but for one family against another family
- one tribe against another tribe
- one country against another country.

And don't we still see that today as we hear of ancient animosities being excuses for hostilities even today?

But our God is not like that.

In God's mercy, God cherishes repentance, reconciliation, transformation!

Our psalm today, Psalm 86, is another example from the Wisdom literature in the Old Testament.

It echoes the first reading's sentiments:

"You, O LORD, are ***good and forgiving***, abounding in kindness."

Further on it continues:

"For you are great, and you ***do wondrous deeds***;

You ***alone*** are God.

You, O Lord, are a God ***merciful*** and gracious ..."

Such beautiful sentiments!

If we add up all these great traits of God we come to:

***God: Power + Justice + Mercy = Love.***

The Apostle John put it simply: ***God is love!*** (1 John 4:8)

It is that same love, God's patient love, that we hear in the Gospel today.

Jesus says to let the wheat and weeds grow together.

God will wait until life is over before final judgment.

God is patiently waiting for each person, here in this building or out in the world, to ask for forgiveness, to transform, to reconcile with God and neighbor.

It should not be that surprising that God is so patient with us.

God made us and loves us.

God made us in the image and likeness of God.

***us: power + justice + mercy = love!***

Of course, we don't have God's power but we do have the power to think, to hear and to speak - so we can forgive, we can change, we can be just.

And God expects us to use these God-given powers.

God expects us to use these powers to work for justice:

- in our homes with our families -setting the tone for fairness

- in our communities, schools, block clubs, work places - making sure the facts are there before making decisions
- in our government - through voting, petitions, civic groups

Let me try something visual with you.

If I were to tell you that I am drawing a picture and I showed you this first line what would you think that I am drawing? |

How about if I showed you the first two lines? L

What am I drawing?

What if I add a little curve and the end of one of the line?

Would we have guessed that I was intending to draw a heart? 

With our clever minds we like to think we can draw conclusions quickly with only partial information.

Maybe we can - but that is not justice.

That is luck at the best but prejudice at the worst.

So, what are we to do with all this information, the wisdom from today's Scriptures?

What are we called to do?

1. be God-like - use our power for justice; be merciful
2. when we fail to be God-like, say we are sorry, repent and reform
3. encourage others to become God-like - for example:

There's a saying: "make friend; be a friend; bring the friend to Christ."

Is there someone you should invite to our Wednesday evening Inquiry Sessions?

There are some little yellow invitations in back of church;  
give one to a friend!

At those Wednesday sessions we'll

answer their questions, their inquiries and

talk a little bit about our God = Love = Power + Justice + Mercy.