

# Fourth Sunday of Lent – March 11, 2018

2 Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23 Ephesians 2: 4-10 John 3: 14-21

In the outline of the development of a relationship between God and mankind that I have suggested as the source of our reflections during this particular Season of Lent, we arrive today at what might be considered the most realistic part. Over the past weeks we have heard of God's desire for a relationship to exist between God and mankind, as told in the story of Noah and the rainbow. Then we heard of what type of response to this desire of God is sought from mankind. This is found in the story of Abraham and the call to sacrifice his son, Isaac. The terms by which this relationship was to be lived out were learned in the account of Moses and the Commandments.

Today, in the Scripture passage from the Book of Chronicles we heard described what happened. It is an account that is, on one hand, tragic. On the other hand, however, it is also hopeful. It is tragic that mankind, as represented by the Chosen People of the Old Testament continued to distance themselves from God and a relationship with God. The result of this brought on defeat and exile. Despite the constant efforts on the part of God to reach out and call this people back lovingly, suffering and disaster resulted because of the choices that were made, choices to distance themselves from God.



the Persian king.

But it is also an account that is hopeful because, despite all that had occurred, God persisted in restoring that relationship. This was done in a way that is not short of amazing. The restoration of the relationship was accomplished by an inconceivable means. As the inspired writers of the Scriptures recognized, the restoration took place through one who was completely outside of the promise of that relationship, Cyrus,

It is a powerful message that is being delivered to us. All and any means are used by our loving God to wake us up from the lethargy of our selfishness in order that we might know, live out, and reflect the goodness of God in our lives.

Yet God was not finished. We can only understand God as determined to maintain a relationship even though mankind – and that means us – continues to drift away, choosing to distance itself from God. It is in this context that we hear the well known verse of John 3: 16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” As familiar as this verse may be – we see reference to it displayed in many different venues – we must not stop with this particular passage. We must go on with the next verse as well: “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”

Where is that effort of the Son to be found now? It is to be

found in us. We who are the Church in the world today. This is the work of the Son, whose Body, as Church, we are. This is what we are to continue in our world today. We are not to tear down but to build up. We are not judge but to love. We are not to condemn but to save.

This is the task of God's Son in our midst. No less is it our task now, today, in our lives and in our world. God so loves the world, but it is in us and through us, by our lives and by our actions, that this love is to be known. It is in us and through us that the darkness so often experienced in our world is to be replaced by the light of God's presence.

We look at our Faith. We recognize the love of God reaching out to us. We respond by living in a manner that reflects an acknowledgment, an honor, and a respect of our Creator God and all of God's creation. This is the way that we carry on the work of the Son in saving and restoring the whole of the creation of our good and gracious God.