

# Second Sunday in Lent 21 Feb 2016

Repent or Perish (I will offer a new title when I finish!)

## **A Native American Cherokee Story – Two Wolves**

One evening an old Cherokee Indian told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people.

He said, "My son, the battle is between two wolves inside us all.

"One is Evil – It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

"The other is Good – It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: "Which wolf wins?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

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Lent is a time

- we acknowledge our sin,
- our turning from God.
- our feeding the wrong wolf!

During Lent the Church for centuries has ridden on the back of judgement and guilt and treated people harshly. And not just in Lent.

While the need for judgement may be true and we should be truly concerned about that judgement much of the institutional church has used judgement and guilt to maintain power..... at the cost of staying true to God.

But we have a secret that the world does not know. And I will get back to that soon!

So from two wolves, to Church history to a changing military understanding.

Some of the military world are now looking a concept called Moral Injury.

Or best understood as inner conflict which is, possibly the main cause so many Veterans suicides.

### Moral Injury

- about doing something morally wrong,
- or witnessing something morally wrong and not stopping it
- or being wronged by someone else.

Since 1999 over 108 000 US Veterans have died from their own hands.

In Australia since 1999, 46 service people have been killed in active service and 239 from their own hands.

While many blame Post Traumatic Stress, they are starting to understand this differently. This is about right and wrong, about the heart and spirit.

That can be in a military context or in a family home. Child abuse is an obvious one.

If we look back at the American Cherokee Story of the Two Wolves we will recognise the inner conflict of the inner.... two wolves.

Most of us will automatically recognise, that we all struggle.

The simple curer for Moral Injury is to repent! To ask for forgiveness But that is not always easy!

Today's Gospel tells of the concern some of them had greater sin than them.

The Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

Jesus said, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way?"<sup>3</sup>

No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

<sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?<sup>5</sup>

No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Jesus is just making it clear it's not really the degree of wrong but simply that we need to repent, acknowledge what we do wrong and be genuinely sorry.

Then the second half of our gospel today, the parable barren fig-tree is the symbol of a life that fruitless or spiritually unhealthy;

And the delay response, represents the Grace of God, in allowing more time for repentance.

What struck me was that as I read the Gospel, Repent or Perish. This is what is happening to some of our troops. They do not know about the need and the benefits of repentance.

Generally, we are not at that level of need for repentance but we all have failed.

We could become depressed if we truly understood our failure.

Yet none of us are perfect.

In part we cannot help it, we will never be perfect in this life anyway.

But it is **in doing good, asking for forgiveness and truly wanting to be good**, creates an opening for God's spirit to enter. And it's then..... that God's spirit rejoices within us.

We experience heaven on earth.

There is both great sadness in humanity and there is great rejoicing for those to turn to God.

Life is both complex and it is simple at the same time.

Let us quickly look at the other readings,

**Genesis 15** - Abram is concerned with the lack of offspring and his family line. But God promises many descendants, because of his righteousness, or right behaviour!

Paul in this Letter to the **Philippians**, Paul calls them and all of us to live as a disciple of Christ. Paul acknowledges the inner struggle, inner conflict and claims you will be transformed by God's power.

Paul states our citizenship is in Heaven. In heaven in spirit. But we can also enjoy heaven on earth in spirit.

At a recent week of recovery for PTSD and Moral Injury Soldiers they used Non- Religious rituals as part of the healing, our secular world struggles with Religious activities.

We are citizens with a very Loving and forgiving God. This is our secret.

**Remember the one I was going to get back to, our secret!**

While we may be sinners and guilty, we know Easter has already happened.

We know about the true gift of life in the spirit of God.

Acknowledging our turning from God, and accepting the real victory that Easter brings?

Remember the two wolves, one is evil and the other is Good.

Acknowledge the one with and evil bent,

And Feed the Good Wolf, the one of God.

The New title

**'In the Grace of God, Repent and be Renewed'**

**An Absolution** - by a Melanesian Monk

God has forgiven you

Go and forgive others and

Most importantly go and forgive yourselves!

Richard Whereat