



Wednesday Prayer

6th Sunday after Epiphany – Deep tree roots, tapping into love that will not fail
“The heart is devious above all else, it is perverse. Who can understand it?” ~Jeremiah 17:9

“The heart” has long been a symbol of love and romance, especially this time of year. Countless songs have been written about stolen hearts and broken hearts. Valentine’s Day ads will challenge consumers to “go straight to the heart” when purchasing that perfect piece of jewelry. “Whoever thought a month’s salary could last forever!”

And yet, our lesson for this Sunday curses those who put their trust in such things, or as Jeremiah refers to them as: “mere mortals” (Jeremiah 17:5). Instead, Jeremiah lifts up a humble tree planted by streams of water (v. 8), putting down deep roots so that its leaves are ever green even in times of drought. This week’s gospel has Jesus sympathizing with the poor, hungry and weeping instead of those who are rich, full and happy (Luke 6:17-26). “The Heart,” it turns out, is a quiet thing. It’s not glamorous at all. When the heart is in Christ, it becomes strong and muscular with a love that lasts forever, unlike the fleeting grasping after mere mortal flesh.

Remember the story of Icarus from Greek mythology? He had fashioned for himself wings made of feathers and wax, so that he could fly high above the clouds. But he flew too close to the sun and the warm sunbeams melted the wax, causing the feathers to fall one-by-one, along with Icarus! There’s a song called “Worlds Apart” by the band *Jars of Clay* that goes:

*I am the only one to blame for this.
Somehow it all ends up the same.
Soaring on the wings of foolish pride I flew too high
And like Icarus I collide
With a world I tried so hard to leave behind.*

When it comes to protecting children against human trafficking, I am inspired by these alternative, muscular forms of love (agape) that are much more compelling than the fleeting Hallmark love (eros) often peddled this time of year. That is not to downplay the significance of human pleasure. No, we are fully embodied to enjoy all our God-given senses. And yet, when they are used to manipulate the vulnerable into our orbit, we are in danger of flying too high for our own good, passing down curses instead of blessings. This Valentine’s Day let’s put down deep tree roots tapping into that love that will not fail, even if we fall. For we fall into the hands of a loving God.

O God, protect the vulnerable among us, especially children who are poor, hungry or weeping, with a muscular agape love and hearts that will not fail them. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

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