

**God's ways are not our ways**

**This lesson is repeated today**

**Sirach shows to an important distinction in our world**

**There is a difference between Justice and fairness**

**Fairness is a human trait**

**We see things**

**And we determine if they are fair or not**

**What is fair about someone getting cancer?**

**What is fair about some enjoying freedom?**

**While others live under oppression?**

**What is fair about a young person dying in an accident?**

**What is fair about living in poverty?**

**Fairness is not God's concern**

**He is concerned with justice**

**He hears the cry of the poor**

**The widows**

**The orphan**

**God is concerned with justice, not favoritism**

**He has established a covenant with all of humanity**

**He is faithful to that covenant, even when often times we are not**

**As a covenantal people, the well-off are called to take care of those who suffer misfortune**

**This is not charity; it is justice**

**What is known as a preferential option for the poor**

**Is not a matter of favoring the poor**

**It is a matter of justice**

**God knows no favorites**

**Yet He hears the cry of the poor**

**When the orphan wails**

**When the widow complains**

**When we call out with perseverance**

**Like the widow appealing to the unjust judge in last week's Gospel**

**God responds; He judges justly**

**Paul experiences this distinction as well**

**We continue reading his letter to Timothy**

**Paul is writing from prison**

**He knows his time is at hand**

***I have competed well***

***I have run the race***

***I have kept the faith***

**And what will be his reward?**

**Being beheaded at the hands of the pagans**

**Is this fair in human terms?**

**That is not Paul's focus**

**He writes in terms of a soldier finishing his tour**

**It is time to go home**

**It is not his choice**

**He is not in control**

**But like a troop of soldiers following orders**

**Being told to pack up**

**They will be returning home**

**Paul also follows his orders**

**And with great anticipation, he makes ready**

**So many had deserted him**

**But he holds no grudge**

**Paul has used his prison time to continue proclaiming the Good News**

**He is not concerned with what is fair**

**He is confident in God's justice**

**That God will come to his rescue**

**Not to free him from prison**

**But to lead him into the heavenly kingdom**

**Our Gospel continues the theme that God's ways are not ours**

**We have 2 people to consider**

**One a very good man**

**The other, not so much**

**The Pharisee was a religious leader**

**He is a model of observance of the law**

**He is not greedy, dishonest or an adulterer**

**He exceeds the requirements of the law**

**He fasts and pays tithes on all of his possessions**

**Again, exceeding the requirements**

**Externally, he is a model Jewish leader**

**Then we have the tax collector**

**A man who has sold out**

**He is working for a foreign government**

**One that is occupying his homeland**

**Tax collectors did not have a regular pay scale**

**They simply made up extra taxes people had to pay**

**What came in over and above what was required was theirs to keep**

**So they had the authority of the Roman army behind them**

**And they used this to take advantage of their fellow Jews**

**Our tax collector makes no claim of innocence**

**But prays for mercy**

**Not even daring to raise his eyes to heaven**

**2 polar opposites**

**Both come to prayer**

**One comes filled with self-righteousness**

**Comparing himself to others**

**Showing how well he carried out the external law**

**Arrogant**

**Thinking he could earn justification**

**Thinking it was all about what he had done**

**The other path is one of humility**

**Recognition that he is a sinner**

**He has not lived up to expectations**

**He was making no excuses**

**Not even daring to raise his eyes**

**He seeks God's mercy**

**Jesus tells us the tax collector goes home justified**

**The Pharisee does not**

**But he can't leave it there**

**If the tax collector only comes to God**

**With no intention of changing**

**He wastes this grace**

**For this to be a true moment of justification**

**He has to resolve to change**

**To begin practicing what he knows is the path he is called to walk**

**Reconciliation has an interesting Latin root**

**It is the same root as the term for eyelash**

**Reconciliation means coming eyelash to eyelash with God**

**Having Him gaze into our eyes**

**Reading our hearts and souls**

**And deciding what we are called to do**

**If our confession is the same every time**

**We can fall into the trap of the Pharisee**

**We can be there comparing ourselves to others**

**Comparing the sins we commit to the really serious ones we don't**

**But then never work on rooting out our sin**

**Whatever it may be**

**If I am unfaithful**

**To God, to my spouse to my children**

**If I use the Lords name in vain**

**If I am selfish**

**If I fall into the same trap of pornography or alcohol**

**If I think I can justify myself**

**If I compare myself to other human beings**

**Whatever and wherever each of us finds ourself**

**Coming face to face with Him who is mercy and love**

**Letting Him gaze into our hearts**

**Resolving to let go of our past**

**And become the disciple we are called to be**

**Knowing that everything we have**

**Health, family, our abilities**

**Our intellect, our work ethic, our life itself**

**It's all gift**

**Yes, we cooperate with what we have been given**

**We develop our talents**

**But at the root, they are gifts**

**And that frees us**

**Because it means that our salvation is not our own doing**

**It is what Christ has done**

**It is what Christ continues to do**

**And how we cooperate and enter into his life here**

**And be ready to accept the invitation to eternal life when it comes**

**Lord, have mercy on us**