

***Homily for July 10, 2018***

The readings for today speak of the theme of human freedom. We can live in such a way that lives are being conformed closer to the will of Jesus or we can be moving further away from him.

Hosea was a prophet who experienced in his personal life what the Lord God experienced with Israel. He was married to Gomer, a woman whose infidelity mirrored the faithlessness of Israel, captured evocatively by the question:

***How long will they be incapable of innocence?***

What a searching question when seen in relation to the Lord's complaint against Israel. Their worship was meaningless because rather than serving the true and living God there were serving Idols whom they claimed to be gods. They think their lives rightly ordered when in fact they are so disordered as captured in the image of sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind. There is nothing substantive to their lives and so are living in a spiritual captivity that will result ultimately in a literal captivity when Samaria at their Altar at Bethel are overrun by the Assyrians in 721 BC.

How this grieves Lord's heart for he sees that when we misuse the freedom given to us we are harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Such sorrow provokes Jesus compassion, a beautiful word that means our Lord was moved in his bowels. He saw how they were like wayward sheep who comes along side of them with his shepherd's staff and leads them. Notice what moves him to compassion is their experience of harassment and helplessness. Harassed by a world that entices them to find value in idols that can never satisfy, helpless because they conclude there is not real meaning and purpose to life, it is like well, sowing the wind.

Notice how Jesus enacts his compassion; through those who are learning to choose to place him at the centre of their lives.

The harvest is indeed plentiful because people are so incapable of the innocence the Lord desires for us. An innocence thoughtfully expressed in today's Collect where we prayed:

***Almighty and merciful God, graciously keep us from all adversity, so that unhindered in mind and body alike, we may pursue in freedom of heart the things that are yours.***

St Peter's is a community called by Jesus to work with His Holy Spirit to express his compassionate heart so that many can pursue in freedom of heart the things that belong to Jesus.