**Homily for the 5th Sunday of Lent(4/7/2019)**

Rev. Francis Kim

A man was praying for his Lenten prayer. “So far today, O God, I’ve done all right. I haven’t gossiped, I haven’t lost my temper. Haven’t been grumpy, nasty, or selfish. I’m really glad of that. But, in a few minutes, I’m probably going to need a lot of your help. I’m going to get out of my bed. Please help me, O God. Amen.”

The past and the future! Letting the past be the past, and letting the future be the future. This links our readings today.

In today’s first reading, the Jewish people have been in exile for years. By now, they look back wistfully to their ancestors, the liberation from slavery in Egypt, the grand Exodus, the manna from heaven, the ‘good old days.’

But, the Lord says through Isaiah, “Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new! Now, it springs forth. … In the desert, I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers.”

God was not only in their past, but also in their future, referring to their return from the exile and a new start. Let the past be the past and the future be the future!

In the second reading, St. Paul knows his past as a persecutor of the Gospel, but now he has been touched by grace and given a new mission as an apostle of the Gospel. He writes, “Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead.” Let the past be the past and the future be the future!

And, today’s Gospel is also about letting the past be the past and the future be the future.

The Gospel reports that one day, Jesus was teaching in the Temple area, and the Pharisees places a woman in front of Him who had been caught in the very act of committing adultery. The Gospel says they made her stand there in front of everybody.

Imagine! They caught and dragged her into the public area of the Temple. She was pulled forward just to make a point in front of a staring crowd.

As a matter of fact, their real interest was not her sin but entrapping Jesus. They said and asked Jesus, “According to Moses’ law, she should be stoned to death for her sin. So, what do you say?”

Of course, it was a trap to accuse Jesus. But, Jesus just bent down and started to write something on the ground with His finger. We don’t know what He wrote. It is intriguing but the Gospel leaves that to our imagination.

Maybe, He wrote every kinds of sins that they committed in the past. Whatever Jesus wrote, the Gospel says that they started to leave, one by one, beginning with the oldest.

Then, Jesus looked at this trembling woman, and said with compassion, “I will not condemn you. You are free to go, and from now on, do not sin any more.” Let the past be the past and the future be the future.

The woman caught in adultery was guilty, ashamed, and repentant. She knew her past. The whole town knew her past. But, when Jesus brought her pardon, He gave her a new future. That is what the forgiveness of God is all about, to be restored to dignity, to be healed and made whole again, and to be given a new future.

The challenge of these readings to us is not to ignore sin and wrong around us. Our world and each of us need repentance. We should repent, of course, but then, not fix our eyes on yesterday’s sin, but on today’s forgiveness and tomorrow’s hope.

We can be like that woman in the Gospel. We all know we have fallen and have all made mistakes. We all wish we could go back and make some corrections. But, the past is the past!

We should remember the past, but not live there because the future is ahead of us. God’s grace for us is in the present and in the future. God’s purpose for us, the new path, the fresh water are in the future from now on.

This story tells us a great deal about Jesus’ attitude to the sinners. He never lost an opportunity to bring freedom to those oppressed by sin and guilt.

The Gospel teaches us that there is Someone more interested in restoring our life than in breaking it. There is Someone more interested in healing our hearts than in destroying us. There is Someone more interested in our future than in our past. His name is Jesus Christ!

Be merciful to others just as He is so merciful to us!