

23<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
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You sometimes wish that everything was calm for a while, that you could sit back and think: all is well. 'Will be fine,' has become an easily uttered saying. But things are not fine, and they don't seem likely to be fine again. Climate change, hurricanes, fear of terrorism everywhere, war - there will never be peace.

Our readings today are about guilt, self-blame. Willfully sticking to one's own vision, one's own, sometimes political, hard line. Harden not your hearts, says today's psalm. Make sure you owe no one anything, Paul writes: 'let the only debt you owe to others be mutual love'. Love requires the ability to adapt to others, or accommodate others when that becomes more difficult. The right understanding of what love demands is something we must seek again and again. Unnoticed, we mostly see our own interest, our own understand-ing. It is not so easy to empathize with others' opinions, or even to consider others' opinions more important than your own. The key question is: who gets to test me? By whom do I allow myself to be judged?

Similarly, if you see that someone is on the wrong path, acting wrongly or stupidly, again you have to be careful when you warn them, because it remains to be seen who is right. Is your vision the reality? Can you communicate on an equal level about behavior, about irritations or opinions? Do others share your views, or maybe they are trying to warn you? And do you hear it, do you allow yourself to be warned?

Matthew works out this tension very concretely. Give an admonition to the other person, and then see what happens and deal with it wisely. Get help if you can't move forward, from the church if necessary. Then, if no new insight comes anyway, give up. When we read that, we do have to ask ourselves how we do it ourselves if we find it necessary. Do we as believers act differently from others? In an open encounter, can we do the other person justice? The impressive faith insight is to deal lovingly with conflicts or disagreements. Loving your neighbor as you love yourself. A difficult item in our faith. Our times are characterized by individualization, everyone has to be able to determine their own living space, if necessary it is conquered by force. There is a lot of social communication, but mostly with people who agree with me. How long will the cabinet formation last again, how sharply do our political choices not simultaneously reflect our divisions?

Environmentalists can make a point. We cannot simply continue on the familiar footing. Our comfort cannot be taken for granted when the world is still haunted by growing inequality between the underprivileged and the successful. In a rich country like ours, it is difficult to give neighbors equal opportunities without discrimination. In fact, we ourselves are guilty of inequality. And that fact looks at us every time we have to choose our place in the refugee debate. What will be our choice among others?

With regularity we pray: 'and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us'. It is a warning to our own address: constantly ask yourself whether you owe someone something, whether in your thoughts and actions you take sufficient account of the people in your path. Test yourself against others, and not just like-minded people. Unnoticed, you can become a debtor to your neighbor.

Making mistakes is inevitable, and it happens to all of us. We are not perfect, and our love is, as Paul calls it, piecework, patchwork. But perhaps love gives a chance to come to forgiveness, one of the most important words in the Christian confession. We may not hold grudges against each other, we may not hold grudges against anyone for wrongdoing and argue about misunderstandings for all eternity.

We must not hold grudges, let alone hatred. We must lead lovingly in society and avoid the hatred and envy that dominates much of our social media expressions. We must lead in the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves.