

Brutal Blessings

Therefore, you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things.

~Romans 2:1 (NRSV)

What do you mean that I need remove the boulder from my own eye before I can help others?

“I mean that you are blinded by it and need to remove it so you can see what the others need.”

Today’s readings from Romans 1:29-2:11 were brutal. I’ll share them piecemeal with you, then we’ll chat. Italicized words are from the reading. Regular type is my conversation.

They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Wow! I saw so many of today’s people fall into this list of every kind of wickedness. Just take a look at our politicians and their supporters. Insolent. Haughty. Boastful. Slanderers. Inventors of evil. Foolish. Heartless. Ruthless. Yep, it sums it up perfectly. I also like that God’s word defined wickedness for me. I felt pretty righteous as I reviewed the list. I try to be respectful, truthful, humble, wise. Feeling pretty comfortable, I was...

Until...

They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die--yet they not only do them but even applaud others who do them.

Yes, the followers applaud the politician’s bad behaviors...

You have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others;

Do I do this? I have a good reason to judge when I see others do these wicked behaviors. I will not applaud these. I will address them and put them in their place! I do applaud those who see the truth about those who do the evil list...

...for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things.

Nope. Really? Not I... What if? I realized that it’s not my place to judge, but it bothers me so much to see their arrogance... You say, "We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth."

Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God?

What Now #6

What if that is between them and God, and it is my place to pray for them, not judge them. It is my place to pray for all of us to repent and ask God to intervene with that. It is not my place to judge them, even if there is evidence that they do the list. There's evidence about me on there, too.

Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

On my worst days, I find myself wishing them ill, and that is wrong. God is showing patience for all of us, and we all fall short of perfection (even if we don't admit it). God's kindness toward all is designed to lead all to repentance. It sets the example. If we are kind, we follow God's example, but it is so hard to be kind when the other side is so mean. I have seen those with whom I agree lash out at others too. It's both. It's the reason we are in this bind to begin with.

But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. For he will repay according to each one's deeds: to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury.

We must repent.

There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil...For God shows no partiality.

Well that about sums it all up. Kindness leads to repentance, yet it took me years to get this far, and I'm not anywhere near where I need to be. In church today, the sermon was about how we were to repent and then pray for God's blessings. Then it is turned over to God. For you see, when we pray for blessings on our country and government, that will happen. I repent.

The Lord Bless you and keep you. The Lord shine his countenance upon you and give you peace. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. Amen. (Numbers)

Reflection: On what bar do you judge others? If applied to you, how would you fare?

Response: What's a current circumstance in which you could look with compassion rather than condemnation? Make it a point to send resentments toward groups out of your mind, and instead look at mercy. Pray for blessings.

Prayer: God forgive my sin of judgment and help me to show mercy to all. Our Father, who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses **As we forgive those who trespass against us.** And lead us not into temptation [to judge others], But deliver us from evil.

I pray this prayer for all:

The Lord Bless you and keep you. The Lord shine his countenance upon you and give you peace. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. Amen.