

do, there is a way forward: to confess, express remorse, atone, make amends, and...change. To know that however wrong our deeds, "the soul you gave me is pure" and that if we work hard enough on ourselves, we can be forgiven, is to inhabit a culture of grace and hope. And that is a life-changing idea".

As Christians we place more emphasis on divine forgiveness through the free grace of God if we but seek it, and provided that we forgive others, rather than working hard on ourselves. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says (§2840): "In refusing to forgive our brothers and sisters, our hearts are closed and their hardness makes them impervious to the Father's merciful love; but in confessing our sins, our hearts are opened to his grace". In St Matthew's Gospel (6:14) Jesus says: "If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.". Nevertheless, in its emphasis on forgiveness and repentance, rather than revenge and the desire to shame people, there is very substantial common ground between Dr Sack's exposition and our faith. (1) Judaism's Life-Changing Ideas -Stephen S

Entrance antiphon: Look to your covenant, O Lord, and forget not the life of your poor ones for ever. Arise, O God, and defend your cause, and forget not the cries of those who seek you.

First Reading: 1Kings 19: 4-8

Responsorial Psalm: 114: Taste and see that the Lord is good. /R

Second Reading: Ephesians 4: 30-5:2

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him. Alleluia!

Gospel: John: 6: 41-51

Memorial Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: O Jerusalem, glorify the Lord, who gives you your fill of finest wheat.



Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B, 2024 Weekly Reflection: Some thoughts of Dr Jonathan Sacks (2): Forgiveness – a Novel Judaeo-Christian concept:

Another passage from Dr Sacks' book (1) concerns forgiveness. He describes true forgiveness as "*characteristic of the Judaeo-Christian tradition*"; noting that the act of Joseph forgiving his brothers for having sold him into slavery (Genesis 50:19-21) was a turning point

in history, for it was the first recorded act of forgiveness in literature: "Joseph said to them, *"Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones. In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them."* Joseph thus makes it clear that he foregoes all thought of revenge. As the former Chief Rabbi explains, the account is an exemplar of a morality of guilt which draws a crucial distinction between the person and his acts. The act being wrong, rather than the person, makes forgiveness possible. Forgiveness means that I fundamentally reaffirm your worth as a person, despite the fact that we both know that your act was wrong.

Dr Sacks comments that contemporary Western culture, often thought by secularists to be morally superior to the Bible, is in fact a regression to pre-Christian, i.e. pagan, Greece and Rome. That is why nowadays people who have done wrong are publicly shamed. In a shame culture the main thing to do is not to be found out, because once you are there is no way back. There is no place in such a culture for real forgiveness. At best you seek to appease. As in Ancient Greece the culprit argues that he couldn't help it, it wasn't that bad, or it was human nature, or he was carried away. The culprit, if found out, undergoes some ritual of self-abasement. Eventually, he hopes not that people will forgive but that they will forget. Dr Sacks concludes: "*That is an ugly kind of culture*". In his final paragraph, in which from his earlier words, he clearly includes Christianity, impliedly though not explicitly, he says: "*Which is why Judaism remains the eternal alternative. What matters is not outward appearances but the inner voice. And when we do wrong, as we all*