

SAID ED July 13, 2008

One of my favorite scripture themes is the description of God as the passionate and forgiving Father. In Luke's gospel Christ is often presented as being moved to compassion as He sees people suffer. God sends Jesus to forgive sins and heal the brokenness of our hearts.

One of the "old saws" often thrown around is the question "If God is so good and merciful, how is it that God sends people to hell?"

My response to this question is inspired by one of my favorite devotional writers, Max Lucado. This is commonly asked question: "how can a loving God send people to hell?" reveals a couple of misconceptions. First of all, God doesn't send people to hell. It is we who decide our fate. God simply honors the choices that people make. Hell is the ultimate expression of God's high regard for the dignity of human nature. The one faculty that human beings possess that no other creature possesses is free will. God never forces us to choose good. God invites our choice of good, but never forces us to do anything. God has given us free will and with that comes the ability to make wrong choices - even when it means the choices that we make send us away from God.

No, "God does not send people to hell", that is the second misconception. The word "people" is neutral, implying innocence. Nowhere in Scripture do we find that innocent people are condemned. People do not go to hell; sinners go to hell, the rebellious go, the self-centered go. So, how could a loving God send people to hell? A loving God doesn't. Our loving God honors the choices that we people make, including sinners.

In the book of Deuteronomy God places before us a choice of life or death. With pleading and gentle voice God implores us to choose life, but ultimately it is up to each one of us. The choices that we make determine our future, for good or for ill. Our decisions carry the weight of eternity. That's why we need to make them in the light of the gospel and the teaching of the church.

So how does a loving, compassionate God send people to hell? God doesn't, we make that choice by our daily actions, our hardness of heart, our refusal to change our ways and listen to the God of love who calls us to new life.

Have a good week and a safe summer!

PS: How's the sale of our parish raffle tickets going in your household? We hope that everyone in the parish will help with this fund raising project.

PPS: Our new Parish Council Officers were elected at last month's meeting. They are: Paul LaChapelle, Chair, Luisa Sam, Vice Chair, Recording

Secretary, Aileen Henning and Communications Secretary, Ryan Barry. Thanks to our outgoing officers: Aliece Franklin, and Cindy Patterson. Thanks to all for sharing the leadership of our parish.
