



Stumbling Blocks

2nd Friday of Lent

Mark 9:42-48

If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

In some respects it might be said that, at least on this occasion, Jesus was inclined to hyperbole. The words here are harsh and unforgiving, and seem totally out of character for Jesus, at least as we think of him, but they very powerfully convey the heinousness of putting an obstacle in the way of the faith of another. “Little ones” refers not merely to children of a young age—so wonderfully impressionable and trusting—but to the spiritually young and immature, as well, i.e. new believers.

While we cannot live our lives always conscious of what others might say or think—a kind of prison, to be sure—as disciples we nonetheless have a responsibility for the influence that we, through our own choices and conduct, exercise upon others. In truth, sometimes what some know of Christ, his love, and his life is seen primarily in our love and in our lives as believers. None of us sets out to present a stumbling block to the faith of others, but our lives touch the lives of others in ways in which we ourselves are not always aware.

During this Lent, as we consider anew what it means to follow Christ, let us not forget consider how the life and love of Christ are communicated through our own lives and love.

Prayer:

Lord, help me in this day in all that I do to be a faithful witness to your love and your truth. Amen.

