

'the measure you give will be the measure you get'

May my words...

*Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might win
By fearing to attempt.*
(Lucio, Act 1 Scene 5)

Any guesses? *Measure for measure*, Lucio Act 1 Scene 5. Shakespeare's play is based on our gospel passage the measure you give will be the measure you get and is set in Vienna where vice runs rampant and the laws have been allowed to sleep for many years.

It's a murky play with lots of hidden secrets and sub-plots. As Isabelle says in Act 2, Scene 2
O, it is excellent

*To have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant.*
(Isabella, Act 2 Scene 2)

We see the misuse of power, and all sorts of things. As the Duke states in Act 3, Scene 1:
*O, what may man within him hide,
Though angel on the outward side!*
(Duke, Act 3 Scene 1)

Mark's Gospel gives us today a warning about the measure we give will be the measure we receive. It is about how we hear and respond to the word of God, but it is also about so much more: about our use of power or misuse of power, and how we address the wrongs we see around us.

One of the great figures of recent Christian history is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was born on 04 February 1906 in Breslau, Germany (now Wroclaw, Poland). He was ordained in 1931 in a divided German Evangelical Church split over whether to support the Nazi's. The issue was whether God had brought about a 'new Israel' in Germany, and many within the church sought 'racial conformity' around the 'Reich church'. Bonhoeffer stood out against this and the state's exclusion of Jewish Christians. The darker side though is that Bonhoeffer did state explicitly that Jews were guilty of Deicide and that they must endure the 'curse of its action in long-drawn-out-suffering.' Fortunately later he became much more vocal in his urging of Christians to care for the powerless and suffering. As he states in his *Ethics* 'In Christ we see God in the form of the poorest of our brothers and sisters'. And he goes on to condemn the church for not holding the state accountable through indirect or direct political action, nor did the church tend to the victims, seeking instead self-protection. Whereas the church should have participated in prayer and justice for the oppressed, if it were to be truly Christian.

Just as this was a troubling thing for Bonhoeffer, it has remained so in many Christian thinkers, with others terming this the 'virus of anti-Judaism.' As Christians we have to denounce the thought that Jews are either being punished by God, or that they have theologically inferior beliefs.

We have to be clear in accepting the state-sponsored mass murder of millions of people, a culmination of persecution which had begun in 1933. This was further deepened by the exclusion of Jewish people from public life in Germany from 15 September 1935, when the Nuremberg Laws were issued. Kristallnacht on November 09, 1938 led to the attacking of synagogues, Jewish businesses, and attacking Jewish people, with 30,000 Jews being arrested and sent to concentration camps: a foreshadowing of the Jewish ghettos, sometimes sealed off by barbed wire. This led, as we know, to approximately 6m Jewish sisters and brothers being killed, with nearly 2m of them dying in just 3 months during Operation Reinhard.

And today we honour and remember them. We recall Jesus as a Jew. And stand in solidarity with them...

We cannot make it right, but we can honour the past, grieve the atrocities, and determine to be different because of what happened.

To return to Measure for Measure, it ends with the duke having righted things, although Marina and Isabella persuade him to spare Angelo's life. And the Duke sues for Isabella's hand stating:

What's mine is yours and what is yours is mine.

(Duke, Act 5 Scene 1)

Today, we stand in solidarity with our Jewish sisters and brothers who died in the atrocities of the Holocaust. We are called to abandon our doubts, lest they cause us to lose the good we might win because of fear. And we know how that can end. And as we do so, today we acknowledge we are one with our Jewish sisters and brothers:

What's mine is yours and what is yours is mine.

So I end with words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer from a poem he wrote in his last days, knowing his death at the hands of the SS was immanent:

*Daring to do what is right, not what fancy may tell you,
Valiantly grasping occasions, not cravenly doubting –
Freedom comes only through deeds, not through
Thoughts taking wings.*

*Faint not nor fear, but go out to the storm and the action,
Trusting in God whose commandment you faithfully follow;
Freedom, exultant, will welcome your joy.*

'the measure you give will be the measure you get'
Amen.