

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) You are just, O Lord, and your judgement is right; treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 94)

ANTIPHON: O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts.

RESPONSE: O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts.

LECTOR: Come, ring out our joy to the Lord; hail the rock who saves us. Let us come before him, giving thanks, with songs let us hail the Lord. **R.**

LECTOR: Come in; let us bow and bend low; let us kneel before the God who made us for he is our God and we the people who belong to his pasture, the flock that is led by his hand. **R.**

LECTOR: O that today you would listen to his voice! "Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the desert when your fathers put me to the test; when they tried me, though they saw my work." **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! God was in Christ, to reconcile the world to himself; and the Good News of reconciliation he has entrusted to us. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is yearning for you, my God; my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.

Or

I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

TODAY'S READINGS Ezekiel 33:7-9; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20

NEXT WEEK (24th Sunday of Year A) Sirach 27:30-28:7; Ps 102; Roman 14:7-9; Matthew 18:21-35

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God will never let us go



10 September 2023 23rd Sunday Year A

One of the most memorable animated movies in recent times is "Frozen." This hit Disney film, which had the song, "Let it Go," tells the story of two sisters, Anna and Elsa.

The elder sister, Elsa, struggles to discover who she really is. After accidentally injuring her sister with her magical powers, she escapes to the icy far north. However, her younger sister, Anna, cannot let Elsa go and goes in search of her.

Anna finds companions along the way - Kristoff, Olaf and the reindeer Sven - who help her to win Elsa back. Elsa repeatedly spurns Anna and her attempts to reach out, but the younger sister's determination to restore the relationship, even to the point of sacrificing herself, eventually leads to a happy reunion.

The determination of the younger sister to fight for the relationship resonates with the message of today's gospel according to Matthew. Jesus explains the importance of trying three times to restore and rebuild the relationship with the person who has done something wrong: First time, go it alone to have it out with them; the second time, bring one or two others; and finally bring everyone to try to win the person back.

The number three in the bible symbolises completeness, wholeness and perfection. By mentioning three times, perhaps Jesus is saying to keep trying until it's totally hopeless. In spite of trying everything humanly possible, and if there is still no

change and the person persists in refusing to listen, Jesus says to then treat the person as you would a Gentile or a tax collector, in other words, an outsider, at least on a temporary basis.

But remember that, earlier in the same gospel, Jesus calls upon a person named Matthew, who is a tax collector, to be one of his disciples. This reveals that, while there are limitations to our own human attempts to restore relationships, no such limitations exist for God, for whom no one is out of reach. God will not ever stop inviting and receiving a person back into the fullness of his/her relationship with God.

The lyrics at the ending of "Let it Go" are: "Let the storm rage on, the cold never bothered me anyway." Sadly, unlike the movie, in real life there are no fairy tale endings and broken relationships are part and parcel of many people's lives.

When relationships are broken, there is often anger, resentment, pain and grief. There can also be feelings of loneliness and isolation and a sense of being left out in the cold. But God wants us to be in loving relationship with one another and with God everyday of our lives. Whatever the difficulties and disappointments we face in life, all we can do is to keep doing our best, knowing and trusting that God will never give up on us and will always be with us.

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