

2008-09 BSP #5
SPECIAL HANDOUT

- A. “In this way God’s mercy is contrasted with God’s justice, and mercy is shown to be not only the more powerful but also the more profound of the two.

“Jesus challenged the distortion of justice in his time expressed in the words: ‘An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’ (Mt 5:38). Today’s forms of justice continue to be modeled on it. Our experience shows that justice alone is not enough, that it can even lead to destruction of self, if that deeper power, which is love, is not allowed to shape human life.” (JPPII, The Mercy of God, n. 4, 12)

2008-09 BSP#5 Group Time Discussion

L – Low, M – Medium, and H – High, indicate the difficulty of a question. Group leaders should select questions that are challenging to their groups but not so difficult that their group members cannot answer.

(A) **“He Opened to Us the Scriptures”** - Questions for scriptural reading and discussion
(Time available: 15 minutes. Do at least 2 questions.)

1. [H] Look at Abraham’s reaction to the Lord’s plan (18:22-23). Abraham had a silent reaction to the Lord’s plan first, and then began his negotiation. Given what Abraham asked of God, what and whom might he have been thinking during that time of silence?
2. [M] What was Abraham’s appearance and attitude throughout this exchange?
3. [M] There is a deliberate parallel drawn between Abraham’s and Lot’s reception of the visitors. What are the similarities and differences?

(B) **“Did Not Our Hearts Burn?”** – Questions for meditation, sharing and prayer. Do either B1 or B2. (Suggested time: 10 minutes)

1. We have seen that hospitality to strangers is a hallmark of a godly life. Do you think of yourself as hospitable to strangers? If yes, share your experiences; if not, what small steps can you take to begin building this virtue in your life? Sometimes it can mean a smile at a stranger, letting someone with small, restless children get ahead of you in the grocery line, or using a respectful, pleasant voice on the phone with an intrusive telemarketer. Are you open to being surprised by a divine visit?
2. Take 3 minutes to reflect on the following: In Eden, the serpent had a conversation with Eve in which he attacked the character of God, accusing God of being untrustworthy. Adam did not defend God’s character. There was only silence from him. In Genesis 18, Abraham passionately engaged with God to request that He act in keeping with who He is – the just Creator and Judge of all

the earth. His “negotiation” was in fact a fierce defense of the character of God, a sincere request for God’s affirmation that He is just. What a reversal from Adam’s silence in the Garden! After Abraham, voices that cried out in defense of God’s greatness included Moses, David, and the prophets. In a world that is becoming more and more agnostic, would you add in your prophetic voice and come to God’s defense? Would you do so by exercising your duty to evangelize? ‘If I preach the Gospel, this is no reason for me to boast; it is a duty for me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!’ (1 Cor 9:16)”

Take 5 minutes to share your thoughts. Then group leader leads the group members to complete the above reflection by saying the following prayer:

O Lord God the Almighty! Great and wonderful are thy deeds. Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages! Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgments are just and righteous! (cf. Rev 15:3-4) Say “Glory Be” to end.