

## Saturday, June 10, 2017 - Day 160 – II Chronicles 29-31, Psalm 130, I Corinthians 5

It seems as though the little church in Corinth is in trouble. Some truly nasty behavior is going on, and everyone knows about it. They say bad news travels fast. We can see here that it travels far. Paul is writing from 180 miles away, to the church that he planted.

The trouble has a primary and a secondary piece. The secondary piece is that a church member is having an ongoing sexual relationship with his stepmother. The primary rub for Paul is that the church leaders won't do anything about it. They are in a position to judge, Paul says, and they have not acted.

Rather, it seems, they have winked at the problem. Someone is even boasting about the situation.

For all of his run-on sentences with eleven commas, Paul is a black and white thinker, and he doesn't mind sharing his beliefs and advice with anyone. Well, as long as that person is a church member. He clearly feels as though he can speak with great authority to the church leaders, but he also knows that he has no power, "out there in the world." The church needs to rule itself, and if it doesn't, then the line is blurred and there is no difference between the church and the world. To be clearer, the church needs to enforce its own rules, and the rules are not of our own making.

There are three people involved in this little imbroglio. The father, whose presence as living or dead is not clear, his wife, and the father's son. A sexual affair between stepmother and stepson is wrong by all accounts, but no charge is brought against the woman. Are we to presume that she is outside the church, out in "the world?" As for the man, Paul says, "Let him who has done this be removed from among you."

For some reason, the church is allowing this behavior, winking at it. Is it because he is a man of status, or a man of great generosity? Could it be that some actually admire him for his manliness or disregard for the rules of society? If that is so, then all of the morals and ethics of the church leaders are called into question. Are the church leaders willing to accept the behavior of this man because of who he is, or who he represents?

If you want to attack the church, you have to do it from the inside. We know how to pull together as a community when the world comes after us. If you want to weaken the church, you have to do it from the inside. It's simple, you just let the world in.

However, we know that we are all a part of *that* world; we all bring a bag of sin with us. Who are we then, to throw someone out of the church? What about that whole "first stone" concept?

Finally, who are we to stand by and have the Jesus community mocked?

By The Rev. Dennis Coleman