

Hosea 1-6 21-22 7-8

Matt. 12:1-8

In the Readings this week, Isaiah has been warning the people that God is not pleased with them. He berates their worship of false gods, the oppression of their fellow men, neglect of the poor and those in need.

Today we learn of Hezekiah. When told by the prophet that he is to die, Hezekiah cried tears and reminds God, as he prays, that he has tried his best to serve him faithfully during his life. God, in his turn, hears Hezekiah's laments and not only grants him fifteen years of further life, but assures him that he will give him victory over the Assyrian invaders. He then receives a sign of God's compassion and mercy by the act of the sun's shadow being reversed five paces on the steps of Ahaz.

In the Gospel, Jesus receives further indignation from the Pharisees who, like the people of Isaiah's day, turned a blind eye to the needs of others.

Jesus says, "What I want is mercy, not sacrifice." Rather than being inward looking and legalistic, Jesus wants them, and all people, to respond as God did to Hezekiah and as he, himself, showed by the example of his own life and ministry.

Rather than judging others, God, who is, 'Rich in mercy,' wants us to be merciful too. Are our hearts as 'hard as stone,' like the Pharisees, or do we act with kindness, understanding and compassion in our assessment of others?