

Isaiah 58: 1-9

Matthew 9: 14-15

Today's Reading is so poignant to how things are in today's world. It reflects the frustration of God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, about the Jewish peoples lack of understanding of what it means to 'truly' fast. That is, to perform, what we would call, 'the actions of Social Justice'

Isaiah bemoans the people's useless efforts to gain God's favour in their show of fasting. Efforts that miss the point of what God requires of them.

“”They ask me for laws that are just, they long for God to draw near: Why should we fast if you never see it, why do penance if you never notice?” They are going about things in the wrong way...”Hanging their head like a reed, lying down in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call fasting, a day acceptable to the Lord?”

But rather, Isaiah goes on to say, “Is not THIS the sort of fast that pleases me – it is the Lord who speaks – to break unjust fetters and undo the thongs of the yoke. To let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke, to share your bread with the hungry, and shelter the homeless poor. To clothe the man you see to be naked and not turn from your own kin?

These words are reflected by Jesus when teaching John's disciples. Jesus is trying to tell them that true fasting is to follow his own example of love and giving to others. He is telling us the same. In Isaiah's words. “Then will your light shine like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over. Your integrity will go before you and the glory of the Lord behind you. Cry, and the Lord will answer; call, and he will say, ‘I am here’.” Such is the call and effect of social justice. It is a call that the Lord is making to us so that our light too will ‘shine like the dawn.’