

## Carol's Reflection – Feb 21

Massimo Bottura is an Italian chef who teaches a class in the popular Masterclass platform. And in the introduction, he talks about being asked what the most important tool in the kitchen is. And he says, after a pause, it is this, it is my palate, for my palate tells me everything that I need to know. For in my palate I have the DNA of my grandmother.

Those words reflect something that we all know -- that whether we knew our grandmothers or not, we carry within us a heritage, something that connects us with generations, who've gone before us. It's an amazing gift.

And it is a gift that Jesus had too. And so today in the gospel, we've turned to Matthew to begin this journey of Lent. We've turned to some words in the Sermon on the Mount. Now the Sermon on the Mount is a very long passage and we know some familiar words from it. It's in the Sermon of the Mount that Jesus says 'blessed are those who...' and in the Sermon on the Mount, in fact, are the verses that are missing from chapter six, where we're reading today, Jesus gives the instructions on how to pray, say 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...', but that is for another day. Today, we're talking about this other bit of Jesus' heritage.

Now he doesn't talk about it in terms of DNA. Certainly that whole idea was long after Jesus lived, but he does talk about it in terms of the heritage that he has. He's speaking to a crowd of disciples. They might all have been Jewish, and they would have known that part of the sacredness of being Jewish was to follow and to abide by God's law, to love one another, but love isn't a feeling and Jesus' words, love is a commitment to action. And so Jesus talks about some of the DNA of being Jewish. The part of loving God and loving the neighbor is about giving alms, supporting those who have less -- about generosity. It is about prayer and a relationship with God. And it is about fasting. Again, thinking about one's relationship with God, letting God be the center of one's reflections, and then doing this.

Jesus is reminding the people who are listening to him, that there are people who give generously, who pray and who fast all for the sake of those who see them giving and praying and fasting. And Jesus says, no, what's not about doing those things for the sake of others. It's about giving and praying and fasting for the sake of our relationship with one another. And with God, it's about being generous with time and talent. It's about focusing our care on one another. It's about how we relate to one another. It's in our DNA to care for one another. Jesus says it's in our heritage, our DNA to have a relationship with God for we are God's beloved.

And as Jesus goes on to reflect on that, he says there are treasures in our lives. And certainly in those days, the treasures that people had might have been the linens that they had, or the physical things that surrounded them.

And he said, no, moths can eat those and things can be stolen. But really the essence

of what is the treasure is where your heart is and your relationship with one another. And with God, and as we begin our Lenten journey, and we think again and again about how we relate to God, we're remembering that God comes to meet us in Jesus. God comes to meet us and encourage us to journey alongside. That God comes to meet us and says to us, you are beloved. God gives us new opportunities for service each and every day. And never should we take that for granted.

There are people around us, certainly within our own community who like the experience of a Lenten practice. For some, it will be giving something up. Sometimes people give up chocolate or pizza or something like that. For others, it will be the practice of taking something on, lighting a candle and saying a prayer at dinner or in the morning, or reading a devotional or something like that. But whatever the Lenten practices that we have, they are always intended to remind us that we are God's beloved and that this is a time of journey and reflection for we've begun Lent.

Thanks be to God for being with us on this journey. After all it's in our DNA to journey with Jesus. Thanks be to God. Amen