



The message that defeats evil

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13
Psalm 19:2-5
Matthew 9:9-13

In the responsorial Psalm for the Feast of Saint Matthew (September 21), we proclaim: "Their message goes out through all the earth." What is our message?

The reading from Ephesians contains the core of our message. Why is this message so important to spread throughout *all* the earth? All of *today's* world?

Because it puts a stop to evil. We are not called to sit and wait for the Second Coming of Christ, relying on a future Jesus to drive out evil. Jesus is here now: in us. We are the earthly body of Christ, and we have a message that's already driving out evil! It's a message of love that has the power to change the world, and it happens whenever Jesus ministers to others through us, speaks to others through us, and enables us to be like him so that we actually live the message.

Do you ever wonder why God "allows" evil to continue? It's not his fault.

Jesus won the battle against evil more than 2000 years ago when he lived a holy life, took our sins to the cross and then overcame death and destruction through his resurrection. We are called to learn from his example and act on it. This is how we defeat evil using the power of Jesus.

Sending military forces against evil leaders and terrorists can bring us some protection and eventual but temporary international calmness, but that sort of victory does not stop the evil of violence nor the demonic sources of evil. Both we and our enemies



have to want to live together in peace before the bumper-sticker slogans of "give peace a chance" and "make love, not war" have any real meaning.

In Matthew 9:9-13, we see a man who deserved to be punished. And the people (and their money) needed to be protected from him. During Roman occupation, Hebrew tax collectors made a livelihood of over-taxing their own people and keeping the change. As a successful collector, Matthew was a cheater, a liar, a traitor, and a thief. Do you know any cheaters and liars? Has anyone betrayed you? Were you ever robbed?

Jesus looked past Matthew's sins and found a place in his heart where goodness still existed. If we want to conquer evil, this is where we, too, must look. Inside everyone – even terrorists – is a precious gem, the type of person God created them to be when he made them in his own image at the moment they were conceived in their mother's womb.

For this message of love to go out through all the earth and transform it, we have to live it in our everyday lives. Every day! We have to overcome our own behaviors that work against love. We have to live out Ephesians 4 in every situation. And we have to be so good at this that we can authentically invite others to do the same.

We cannot convert evil-doers who don't want to change, but we can certainly spread Christ's gift of peace much more widely than we have been doing.

Every act of love in the face of evil conquers evil. Isn't it time the Body of Christ on earth started behaving more like Christ? What are YOU doing to make a difference?