

Homily
1/26/20
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

“The Lord is my light and my salvation, of whom should I be afraid?” This line from our Psalm today is the unifying theme for this weekend’s readings. In the book of Isaiah, our first reading showed us that the people of God had to be humbled to see the light of God. The people that walked in darkness had seen a great light, a vision for the future promised to the people of God despite the taskmasters that had beaten and led them to submission. The Lord’s promise was that all that had sought to strike them down would be destroyed and that the yoke of burden of this world would be lifted.

St. Paul’s message to the Corinthians seconds this teaching in that the Lord’s path is to unify, not to divide. But when we rely solely on ourselves, on our humanity, that we will be led astray and the burden of life again returns to divide and to bring turmoil to our souls and the Body of Christ. The Love of God though, in His promise to the nations, fulfilled through the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, is what offers us that Hope that can defeat any burden.

And then from our Gospel this weekend, Matthew shows us how, no matter what our paths in life may be, that God is calling each of us to be witnesses to the Way, the Truth, and the Life that can only be found in the message of Salvation through Christ.

When we hear the phrase, “I will make you fishers of men,” it invokes in each of us a different notion of the calling of the Apostles, and our own callings as well. Before I went to seminary, there was a promotional video that would

always be shown at seminarian and vocational discernment retreats called “Fishers of men” based on today’s Gospel. It was a dramatized representation of the call to Holy Orders that some of us are called to, but missed the mark somewhat, as the calling from Christ isn’t just about those that are called to a religious vocation! Each and every one of us here is called to a vocation by God. I’m not talking just about your job, or just about the specific vocation of Marriage, or Religious life, or the consecrated single life though. I am speaking about how God is calling each of us to a vocation of love, every moment of every day. How best can we emulate He who has given us everything that we have to hope for? If Christ truly is the “light and salvation of the world,” how have we lived that truth out each and every day?

Living out the truth in our modern times, is difficult, much like I imagine being a follower of Christ would’ve been in the early centuries of the Church. The life and mission of Christ is a life that is demanding, a life that calls us into relationship with God, yes, but also a life that calls us to sacrifice, to give of ourselves, and to ultimately love as God alone can love.

This call to love is a call to put everyone before ourselves and our desires. To, as a prayer called the litany of humility puts it, ultimately “be delivered from the desire to be loved.” As Jesus says in Matthew 5 as we will hear again next month, “love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the good and the bad, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual

about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect!”

This would seem to be an impossible bar that The Lord is setting before us, but to our God, all things are possible! How many times in life have we doubted the authority and power of God, and been proven a fool? How many times have we prayed for something to happen that seemed impossible and been shown the grace and mercy of God when what was needed was answered in a way we could never explain? Sometimes we tend to forget about the Majesty and glory of God and either make excuses when we got what we wanted, give praise until the next time we don't get what we want, or get upset with God that we didn't get exactly what we wanted, when we wanted, how we wanted.

As St. Paul tells the Corinthians today, he is preaching with heavenly wisdom, and not with “human eloquence.” When I read those words for St Paul, I thought, “Oh, he's pushing a button here!” He's trying to get us to react. Because many times when we speak with human eloquence, we want to speak very perfectly, very logically. And when someone doesn't understand it's because they're too dimwitted, they don't quite understand quite what it is we are saying.

But when Paul was talking about human eloquence, he wasn't lifting it up, he was putting it down. Because no matter how eloquently we speak, we are still speaking imperfectly. We are still bound by our language, by our understanding. And the understanding of God supersedes anything we can come up with. The reality is that “No one can know the mind of God.”

So, when we get upset that God's will isn't our will, and that God's plan isn't “as good” as our plan, we are called to remember just who God is and *whose*

we are. We must recall that we were created in His image, and not that He was created in our image. God seeks us to always unite with His will, but that many times our “human eloquence” that seeks to justify or rationalize everything to make sense to us, to human ways of thinking, can tend to lead us astray towards more divisive solutions rather than unification with the Will of God. This is where jealousy, envy, and the old “us versus them” mentality can swiftly sweep in. Why does God bless so-and-so with such-and-such and only give me what I have? Why does this group of people have to try less than my faction? This “us versus them” mentality is ultimately what St. Paul was talking about in our second reading. How do we, as members of the Body of Christ, of which Christ is the head, work together, if not by following the will and purpose of God? For as scripture tells us, a house divided against itself is destined to fail, and to fall. When we unite around divisive language and not around the love of God, we are setting ourselves up for future heartbreak and failure.

Unity around the love of God then, is the goal. But it means us putting others before ourselves, taking off our blinders to see what is going on outside of our own personal chaos, and looking to the Lord for salvation, rather than seeking to fix everything ourselves. When in right relationship with God, we can rightly then see that all that is good is from Him who is the light of the world. When in right relationship with God, we can rightly see that we are in need of a Savior, which He has shown us that He is through His passion, death, and resurrection. When in right relationship with God, we can ultimately witness to the Truth that through His love, we can manage to put God first, others second, and ourselves last as love would dictate. When we do this, we can listen to the words of Christ from Scripture and truly understand and embrace the hard truth when Jesus says,

“My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” When in right relationship with God, though the obstacles may never disappear or lessen, they will ultimately be easier to bear because they will be borne on our shoulders for the sake of love.