

Focused on the RIM

Homily for June 25, 2023

In my preparation for today's homily, I came across this reflection on fear. It reads:

There are two days in the week upon which and about which I never worry; two carefree days kept sacredly free from fear and apprehension. One of these days is Yesterday. Yesterday, with its cares and frets and pains and aches, all its faults, its mistakes and blunders, has passed forever beyond my recall. It was mine; it is God's.

The other day that I do not worry about is Tomorrow. Tomorrow, with all its possible adversities, its burdens, its perils, its large promise and performance, its failures and mistakes, is as far beyond my mastery as its dead sister, yesterday. Tomorrow is God's Day; it will be mine.

There is left, then, for me but one day – Today. It is only when we will fully add the burdens of these two awful eternities - Yesterday and Tomorrow - such burdens as only the Mighty God can sustain - that we break down.

It isn't the experience of today that drives people mad. It is the remorse of what happened yesterday and fear of what tomorrow might bring. These are God's Days ... Leave them to God.

Fear is an emotion that can so control our lives and so it is appropriate for us to learn from the wise counsel expressed in the brief essay I just read to you. How can we live for today, not regretful about yesterday or anxious about tomorrow? Jesus gives us an answer in today's Gospel that I will build around the acronym RIM. Rims are important because they provide a border, a boundary. Without rims, we could have no tires. Without the rim for the basket, there would be no target for the player to aim the basketball. No rim no swoosh. Without the rim, not pickle ball paddle or tennis racket. And for me that would be very sad! I love playing tennis and am warming to pickle ball.

More important than all of these rims are the ones Jesus teaches about in today's Gospel. We can learn to live more fully in the present moment when we remember our RIM.

- Relationship
- Identity
- Mission

I want to show you that when we see the connection between these three words, we will have a rim, a boundary for our lives that will help us to trust more and fear less so we can learn to live present to this one day.

So, let's see what Jesus says in today's Gospel about relationship; identity and mission.

Relationship:

Relationships are challenging. So often it is because of relationships fraught with hardship and heartache that we are obsessed by the past and apprehensive about the future. Jesus invites us to not fear those who in various ways threaten us and may even at times overwhelm us. Listen to what he says:

²⁶ “So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷ What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops¹

Jesus is inviting us into a relationship of trust whereby we are not dictated to by those who would manipulate and control us. Rather we are to entrust ourselves to Jesus so that as we continue to deepen in our relationship with him; we can invite him into those places in our lives where we have experienced deep and lasting trauma which he wants to heal as we cooperate with his grace.

I have been helped this past week by a series of podcasts entitled “The Anatomy of a Wound” hosted by two Catholic therapists Jake Khym and Bob Shuchts. For any of you who attended the women’s conference last month at St Luke’s: “Restoring the Feminine Heart, Jake and his wife Heather were the keynote speakers. In this series of five podcasts Jake and Bob masterfully and honestly share how we can better understand our wounds as the pain is uncovered and brought into the healing love of Jesus. When we come to a greater experience of integration, then what we have learned from Jesus in the dark recesses of our souls can be proclaimed from the housetops, because Jesus’ relationship with us is becoming ever more central to our lives. Then all other relationships can be seen in relationship to Him, and we can live more purposefully in the present moment.

Now Jesus is very aware of how there will be people in our lives who do not have our best interests at heart, to the point that they may want to kill us. How is it, Jesus can say we are not to fear them? After all, to experience physical violence – causing death is the most traumatically horrific thing I can imagine. But notice what Jesus says:

Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul;²

Jesus invites us into a life that is being formed from the inside out, the soul is the eternal dimension of our current human life. As we can more fully allow for Jesus to touch our souls with his love our relationship with him will be more fully established, so in turn, we are able to discover our identity. This is so he can speak truthfully to our souls.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#) (Mt 10:26–27). (1993). National Council of Churches of Christ.

² [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#) (Mt 10:28). (1993). National Council of Churches of Christ.

Identity:

Listen to what Jesus says about our true identity.

Are two sparrows not sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹ So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows³

Jesus is talking here about our identity and wants us to embrace the opportunity to live in the present moment. Notice what Jesus says here, we are not to be afraid because we are of more value than many sparrows. But this is part of our identity crisis. We may not believe this. And this what leads to a restless striving to prove ourselves because we have come to believe in identity lies that then can govern how we live with deep anxiety and stress. Parents, may I encourage you to be very careful with the words you use to your children when, for instance, they accidentally spill some milk. Don't overreact and name-call them, "You are always so clumsy and careless". This can adversely affect their sense of identity and lead to the identity lie "I am just a clumsy, careless person".

I know that in my life I have battled the identity lie that I will never amount to anything because the most influential man in my life as a young adolescent, he wasn't my father, my dad died when I was ten, shouted to my mother in a drunken stupor that woke me from a sound sleep as he pronounced "I would never amount to anything". The words that night lodged a lie into my soul, This lie coupled with repeated behaviours that affirmed the lie has impacted my life profoundly.

How about you? Can you name things that were said to you about your identity that you have internalized and battle against these lies regularly? I know only Jesus can heal my wounded soul so that I can increasingly know my identity as the beloved son of my heavenly Father. Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father something I am slowly learning to embrace and so know my true identity.

Mission:

When we know who we are in relationship to Jesus as he heals us from identity lies we can then in turn know our true mission. What does Jesus say about our mission?

³² "Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³ but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny."

³ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#) (Mt 10:29–31). (1993). National Council of Churches of Christ.

This is a puzzling and troubling verse. What does it mean? I think it is connected to the verse I have not yet quoted when Jesus says:

rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell⁴

Who is the one that wants to destroy both our soul and body in hell? Who is it that wants us to always live with a distorted sense of self? Not God, but the devil. Here is therefore the sobering teaching of this passage. That while it is true there may have been people who have deeply and adversely affected our lives, Jesus wants us to cooperate with his grace so that we can discover our true mission. What is that mission? It is to allow him into our lives so that through the way we speak and live we are acknowledging him. For you see it is possible that we may get to the end of our lives allowing ourselves to be governed and directed by the devil, so that we are not only living a hell on earth but could come to know this dreadful and eternal reality.

Does Jesus want this for any of us? No he does not. Rather as we come to depend on him not being controlled by remorse over the past or dictated to by an unknown future so we live meaningfully and purposefully in the present. As this happens then we can know that my relationship with Jesus is central to my life, so I can grow in knowing my true God given and loved identity which will enable me to live out my mission. As we are attentive to this we can learn to live this one day well, acknowledging Jesus as the one shaping my life as I focus on the RIM.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#) (Mt 10:28). (1993). National Council of Churches of Christ.