

Homily For Tuesday of the 12th Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1

St Peter's 8:30 AM/7:00 PM Masses - June 25, 2019

Genesis 13:2,5-18 "Raise your eyes ... all the land you see I will give to you and your offspring forever."

Psalms 15:2-5 "Those who walk blamelessly and do what is right ... shall never be moved."

Matthew 7:6,12-14 "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you."

Two Paths

Introduction

Good News is not good because it is easy. Sometimes the message of Jesus is very clear. We often have a pretty good idea what we are supposed to learn, how to behave and what to do to achieve our desire for his kingdom. The hard part is the challenge of how to follow that message. That's often why the people are astounded or amazed at his teaching. We might be inclined to say: Really, is the kingdom of heaven going to be that hard to achieve, that much of a challenge for us.

Today's message from near the end of the Sermon on the Mount is like that. That is why we have to return over and over again to the realization, in humility, that we can only be saved when the grace of God, his free gift to us, perfects our desire for heaven, making it a possibility.

In the Old Testament, sometimes the richness of the of the inspired writings are a little bit hidden from us. We should be better at it. After all, a central understanding of our Catholic faith from the very earliest times is that Jesus IS the fulfilment and the realization and the manifestation of everything that happens to the people of Israel.

Psalm

It's never a bad idea to start with the psalms. See how beautifully today's psalm proclaims what the early Church Fathers always saw, that the psalms hold Jesus and the truths of our faith within them. Sometimes I imagine what Jesus prayed

all those times he rose early, long before dawn, and went out into the wilderness pray, to commune with the Father of life.

Imagine with me, if you will, hearing Jesus' pray these words from the depth of his sacred being: "Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right, and speak the truth from their heart, who do not slander with their tongue ... but who honour those who fear the Lord ... Those who do these things shall never be moved." Can't you just feel how Jesus embodies this? Our Lord, who did all things well ... the blameless victim of human jealousy and cruelty ... whose heart was the embodiment of truth ... who was not moved from his path to be our saviour.

Genesis

The story of Abraham and Lot is worth much reflection. Genesis brilliantly describes the choices made by Abram and Lot, and their dire consequences. Unlike the psalms, where God is appealed to and praised continuously, we never hear whether Lot has any faith. He doesn't appeal to God for help. That's why we look to Abraham as the one whose faith is reckoned to him as righteousness.

When the land they were sharing became too small to support the size of the herds they had, Abram said to Lot, Let's not fight. We are both in positions of strength. Let's just spread out and go in different directions.

Now this bit of brilliant story telling has Abram offering the choice, which is left or right. This is not just a geographical decision. But look at the spiritual implications it has. Lot chooses to go where the land looks good for him. But where does he go? Two things are significant. The inspired writer tells us that he went East. Since Adam and Eve, after they sinned and were banished from the place of innocence and intimacy with God, went East. East is the biblical direction away from the Garden, away from the kingdom.

The other significance of Lot's choice is that he went towards Sodom and Gomorrah, cities which were later destroyed for their immorality. So Lot places himself in the shadow of that evil sphere of influence.

Abram went west, where God showed him the land which would be the place of the presence of God to his people. God works out his plan through those who cooperate, through those who oppose it and also, as with Lot, through those who make their choices based solely on worldly considerations.

Matthew

The Sermon on the Mount over and over again gives us the alternatives to choose between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of the world.

We work hard in our culture to convince ourselves and each other that there is no clear line between right and wrong, to make moral choices into a continuum. There's no real right or wrong, There are only shades of grey. That's why the book, 50 Shades of Grey is so obviously a title fit for the kingdom of Satan as it blurs the line between what is good and wholesome and what destroys the beauty of intimacy.

But with Jesus there is no ambiguity. Do not give to dogs what is holy. Dogs aren't the lovable loyal pets we make them out to be. They were a symbol of death. Queen Jezebel was eaten by dogs when she died. That was a sign of a cursed life.

Do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you. A simple understanding of this line is not to throw your best jewelry in front of pigs. The Jews considered pigs an unclean animal. As with the dogs, the message is not to dirty something of great value, some precious thing, by keeping it in presence of something unholy.

In both cases, participation in the kingdom is sacrificed. Finally, enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Call To Action

Two paths. Two ways to go. Good or evil. The wide path or the narrow path. The left or the right. Every choice matters. Everything we do needs to be brought into the light so that we may see with clarity where God is present and where there is

only darkness appearing to be good. Yes, the road that leads to life is hard, but our light on that path is Jesus Christ himself. In him there is no darkness. In him alone is there salvation.