

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

St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - June 22, 2021

Genesis 13:2,5-18 "The possessions of Abram and Lot were so great that they could not live together."

Psalms 15:2-5 "Those who walk blamelessly will walk in the Lord's presence and will never be moved."

Matthew 7:6,12-14 "The gate is wide and the road easy that leads to destruction, and many take it."

The Path of Life

Introduction

If you go to a weekend retreat at Mt St. Francis, in Cochrane, on Sunday morning, as the retreat comes to an end, Fr. Kevin Lynch typically would give a talk at breakfast on the suggested donation. He always called his talk, "The sermon on the amount." That's important because it is the money used to keep the centre running. Having been nourished spiritually over the weekend, most would want to contribute decently.

With the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you", today we come to the end of a pretty amazing kind of Gospel retreat. Can you imagine what you might want to contribute to the retreat centre which had brought in Jesus, the Messiah, who was leading the retreat which the advertising called 'The Sermon on the Mount'? How much would we be willing to contribute to the saviour of the world. What would we give if we had been inspired to walk a narrow and more difficult path of holiness, but one which we were now convinced would lead to life itself?

Matthew

I am not as much of a sports fan as I used to be, but I still listen to the way commentators talk about how a sports team can be successful. It is not uncommon to hear that a certain player could be the saviour of a franchise, or that certain types of players will be needed to bring this team to the 'promised land'. I admit that I am sad when I hear the language of faith being used in the

context of a worldly crown. It suggests that worldly success is the best we can hope for in this life.

Jesus never criticizes the work that must go on in the world to be successful. However, he consistently lays out the priority of kingdom values over worldly ones. Today, he tells us that the summary of all the law and the prophets is contained in this rule. Wanting forgiveness or patience or anything at all from others, we are challenged to do the same.

Christianity is very big on how we treat others. This is the narrow way proposed by Jesus. Our tradition has always seen this narrow way as the path to the promised land. There is another path. It is a wide highway that is very nice and comfortable but it does not lead to the fulfilment of promise. It leads to destruction. The path to life is an intentional way of self sacrificing love. If you follow it, you will find a joy you can't imagine and did not think possible.

I think we have come to expect that we will be challenged by what Jesus says and does. We know it's not an easy path he asks us to follow. We are used to that from Jesus. What we may find shocking, however, as Jesus makes the closing remarks of his sermon, is that the narrow path of holiness will have few people on it. This means that, if we are following a large crowd, we are quite probably on the wrong path and it's time to check ourselves. The psalmist gives us some great advice for doing that: "Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right and speak the truth from their heart, who do not slander with their tongue ... those will live in the presence of the Lord and shall never be moved."

Genesis

Abram walked a pretty narrow path of faith. He took a chance on following God. He and Sarah became the founding ancestors of the great nation which gave us the saviour. It was not a smooth path and he wasn't always solidly on it, but he kept coming back to that path through faith in the one who called him.

Lot, on the other hand, is somewhat problematic. He represents most of the world. It doesn't tell us that he was a bad person, but he consistently takes a wide and easy path. When it is time for Abram and Lot to split up, he does not defer to

his elder like he should have. He takes the first choice which Abram offers him. And, what does he do but take the best land he can see. It looks good, but we need to notice that Lot is setting up his tent near the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sacred Scripture brilliantly but subtly tells us that Lot takes a wide and easy road that leads to destruction. Further, it is only after Lot is gone that God shows Abram the promised land, the path of life.

Call To Action

I find myself returning constantly to St. Thomas More's great distinction. I think he nails exactly what Jesus constantly emphasizes, the difference between the priorities of the world and those of the kingdom. Remember when Jesus told those who tried to trap him, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." At his martyrdom, at the moment of his death by execution, St. Thomas says, with the joy of knowing he had walked the narrow path of life, declares, "I remain the king's good servant, but God's first." On this feast day of the martyrs St Paulinus, St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More, it is our turn to make the decision, not necessarily to martyrdom, but certainly to a radical choice for life, a path that may be more lonely than I want, but one which leads to life.

Jesus doesn't ask me to stop participating in the world. He asks me to make a choice about my ultimate priorities. How much in the last year have we spent trying to save ourselves from physical sickness and how much have we spent our resources on our spiritual health. As things open up, it's time to let Jesus challenge us in a new and profound way. Do you want to enter the promised land or not? How much are you willing to pay for that great reward? He paid for it with the price of love, with his whole self? Shall we follow him or not?

Key Passages

Collect: *O God, grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you.*

Genesis: *The possessions of Abram and Lot were so great that they could not live together, and there was strife between their herders. Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right. Or, if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left. Lot saw that the plain of the Jordan was like the garden of the Lord. So he journeyed eastward. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the plain and moved his tent as far as Sodom. The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "All the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. So Abram settled at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.*

Psalm: *Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right and speak the truth from their heart, who do not slander with their tongue ... those will live in the presence of the Lord and shall never be moved.*

Matthew: *Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not give what is holy to dogs and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them underfoot and turn and maul you, for this is the law and the prophets. 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.*

St. Thomas More: *I remain the king's good servant, but God's first.*