

Homily For Tuesday of the 1st Week of Ordinary Time - Year II

St Peter's 8:30am/7:0pm Masses - Jan 11, 2022

1 Sam 1:9-20 "I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord."

1 Sam 2:1-8 "My heart exults in the Lord. My strength is exalted in my God."

Mark 1:21-28 "I know who you are, the Holy One of God."

Extra Ordinary Time

Introduction

Season follows season. Darkness crowds out the light until it seems as if we are in a state from which nature can't possibly recover. Perhaps this is a state which is familiar to us in our own lives. Perhaps there are those times or periods, or even just lonely moments in the middle of the night, when our confidence that we will be OK is very low. This is a truly remarkable time, in a way, because there is a darkness in the world which everyone is feeling. Will we recover or not?

In the liturgical year, Christmas comes right into the heart of that darkness. We have brought to mind the real events of history that remind us that we are not forgotten by God. We are known by God. The saviour came into history, into the chaos and darkness, so vulnerable, so weak, and yet, as the Gospel tells us, with full authority over the powers of darkness.

If we are really hungry for the light, we will notice a subtle movement from darkness to light. There is a lot of uncertainty in the world, but we know light and warmth will increase over the next five months. Ordinary time is for us to have that exact same confidence that God is bringing light into darkness.

1 Samuel

Hannah is a most wonderful figure in God's great plan of salvation. I never tire of hearing about her. First and most obviously, Hannah foreshadows Elizabeth. The comparison is very strong. They are both unable to bear a child. But, through intense prayer and by grace, both she and Elizabeth participate with God in the bringing about new life. And this life is not just a child, but the realization of hope

for the entire world. Hannah will bear Samuel, then dedicate him entirely to serve God. What a gift she gives to us. That child will be the prophet Samuel, who anoints King David. And he, though imperfect in some ways, will be the king who most resembles God's kingship, the man after God's own heart. Elizabeth will also give her son to the Lord, and to the world. That son, John, will baptize the perfect king, the one who is not just a man after God's own heart, but actually is that heart of love.

As rich as that comparison is, Hannah also foreshadows Jesus himself. Her prayer in the temple is so intense, it looks to the priest there like she is drunk. Isn't that a great image? To be intoxicated with prayer to God. Now think of the Lord himself at his moment of greatest distress, in the garden, whose prayer is so intense it is manifested as sweat falling like drops of blood. In the greatest offering the world has ever known, he gives his will to the Father. Through that offering, light will triumph over the darkness. Neither Hannah nor Jesus hold back, and the result of both is our hope of eternal joy.

Mark

Ordinary time takes us to the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Here we find out that it is not really the scribes and Pharisees that are the enemies of Jesus. It is the demonic forces themselves, called unclean spirits in this passage. The demon knows who Jesus is and can't stand his teaching and tries to stop it. How does the demon do this? The people are amazed at the authority of Jesus teaching, and even more that the unclean spirits submit to his authority.

Those unclean spirits use the technique of exorcism, by naming the one they are trying to control. So, their identifying Jesus as the Holy One of God is the attempt to silence him, rather than submit to him. We should not miss how important is this interaction. The dark forces of the world reject the power of God and want to be independent of him. But who wins? It's no contest. Jesus silences the demons.

Call To Action

Like the possessed man, we are in the middle of a battle for possession of our souls. But we are not alone. We have Jesus, whose authority calls out of us what would enslave us and make us miserable.

In the world, I don't think anyone would disagree that this is no ordinary time. What will happen looks like it depends on forces beyond us. There are demons crying out against the Lord of life - You don't own me. I can do whatever I want.

Ordinary time in the natural world is filled with doubt and rejection of God. But this is the ordinary time of the supernatural life, where it is the demonic forces which are in terror that their time may be at an end. This is the time of the authority of God being manifested. We are the people who ask, what is this teaching? What is this authority? Even the demons obey him. But, just like it isn't enough for the demons to recognize the authority of Jesus, this is the time for us to make a decision on how deeply we will follow the Lord of life. We need to draw on the intensity of Hannah's prayer. And, like her, allow the confidence to grow in our fearful hearts that God is in charge.

Pour out your heart to the Lord. Let all of your anxiety be expressed. But then, let yourself be calmed by the knowledge that God has heard you. That is the greatest gift. That is the peace that we celebrate in Christ. It's the knowledge that God is truly Emmanuel. God is truly with us. Christmas celebration is past, but not the fact that Jesus is our Emmanuel, God with us. The demons knew it and rebelled. Hannah knew it and rejoiced. Look to Hannah. Look to Jesus.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *All the earth shall bow down before you, O God, and shall sing to your name, O Most High!*

Collect: *Almighty ever living God, mercifully hear the pleading of your people and bestow your peace on our times*

1 Samuel: *Elkanah, his wives and children offered sacrifice at the temple in Shiloh. Then Hannah rose and presented herself before the Lord. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord, and wept bitterly. She made this vow: "O Lord of hosts, if only you will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. Eli, the priest, said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself?" Hannah answered, "I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord." Then Eli answered, "Go in peace. The God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him." Then the woman went and her countenance was sad no longer. And the Lord remembered her. In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the Lord."*

Psalm (1 Samuel): *My heart exults in the Lord. My strength is exulted in my God. He raises up the poor from the dust. He lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honour.*

Mark: *Jesus and the disciples went to Capernaum. In their synagogue, a man with an unclean spirit, cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" Crying with a loud voice, the unclean spirit came out of him. They were all amazed, and kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching, with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him."*