

Homily For Tuesday of the 20th Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1

St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - August 17, 2021

Judges 6:11-24 "The angel said: Go deliver Israel. I commission you."

Psalm 85: 8-13 "God will speak peace to those who turn to him with their hearts."

Matt. 19:23-30 "Everyone who has left family or possessions for my name sake will inherit eternal life."

Big Questions

Introduction

Years ago, I was meeting my niece's future husband for the first time. I thought I would start by asking him a funny question to put him at ease. I didn't realize that he was terrified of his future in-laws and it had the opposite effect. I just asked him, "So, if you were a fruit or vegetable, which one would you be? He was stunned into silence. Many years later, he is still traumatized.

There are lots of questions. Who will win the federal election or the Stanley Cup? How will the pandemic resolve? Will it ever resolve? Questions can open up so many possibilities, or they can stop us in our tracks.

Today's readings offer us some of the best questions and perhaps leaving us to consider what questions we should ask God or, perhaps even better, what question God might be asking of us at this very point in our life and the life of the world.

Judges

This week we are reading from the Book of Judges. These were not courtroom judges, but individuals - men and women - whom God raised up to save Israel when they cried out to him. Joshua was the great general who had led the people into the land of promise. But his generation had passed away and, as it says, "A generation arose which did not know the Lord. They did what was evil, serving the Baals, the gods of the people of the land." They did whatever was right in their own eyes, and so the Lord left them to follow their own designs, which they did right up to the time when their enemies defeated and oppressed them.

But when they finally cried out to God, he sent his angel to Gideon and commanded him to rise up and free the people from bondage. But the Lord seemed so far away that Gideon's questions are based in a loss of relationship and a loss of trust. "How can the Lord be with us when we are suffering?"

Have you ever asked a question like that? I think people who want to have faith often do ask: "Lord, if you are so loving and powerful, how come I am going through this trial in my life?"

The angel is able to convince Gideon that it is indeed the Lord who is coming to him, by the miracle of burning up his offering of food. But he can't look high enough to see God's power, so he asks: "How am I going to deliver my people? I am weak and the lowest of my family." The answer to Gideon is the same answer God will give you and me: "Do not be afraid. The Lord is with you. It is I who am sending you, and I will be with you."

Matthew

In yesterday's Gospel, the rich young man's misguided question was: "What good deed must I do to have eternal life?" He wasn't a bad person but he was trying to get enough points to earn his own way to eternal life. Jesus flipped that question on its ear. You have to stop depending on your actions and your possessions. They are weighing you down so much that eternal life will be impossible for you. The young man was grieving because he didn't get an answer he could accept. But the problem was not Jesus' answer but his question.

Jesus tells his disciples that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples were greatly astounded. What's their big question: "Then who can be saved?" They also are stuck in worldly values and worldly perspectives. Their question reveals their problem. They think that riches are a sign of God's favour, when it is really those same riches that keep a person from turning to God.

Jesus answer has two parts, both essential. For mortals, eternal life is impossible. But for God all things are possible. Now the disciples had, indeed, forsaken much

worldly possession. They will inherit the very thing that earthly attachments endanger, the blessing of eternal life.

Our Big Question

Our possessions, whether great or small, will always tend to lead us to a kind of self sufficiency, which will blind us to the fact that we are utterly dependent on God. Nothing we have will keep us from getting sick or aging or coming to the end of this life.

This is what is missing from the pandemic discussion. Who is asking how we are going to be saved, not for this life but for eternal life. That doesn't mean we stop acting safely. What it means is that our primary task is to turn radically in God's direction and ask a better question, one which comes from a place of dependence on God and on the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

"What do I need to leave behind to be saved?" Catholic singer, Matt Maher, has a song I like in this regard. It's called "Lay It Down." It goes like this: Everything I have, everything I am, everything I long to be, I lay it down at your feet." That's a good prayer.

Today's passages tell us that the angel of the Lord turned to Gideon, that Jesus turned to the disciples. Today, let us turn to God and lay down at his feet everything we have and everything we are. Let us ask him the question that will lead to salvation, to eternal life.

Key Scripture Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *O Lord, my heart will rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord who has been bountiful to me.*

Collect: *Grant that we may always ponder spiritual things and carry out in both word and deed that which is pleasing to you.*

Judges: *The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said, "The Lord is with you." Gideon answered, "But, sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us. But now the Lord has cast us off." Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go deliver Israel. I hereby commission you. He responded, "But sir, my clan is weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least of my family. The Lord said, "I will be with you." Gideon said, "Show me a sign." The angel of God said, "Take meat and unleavened cakes and put them on this rock." The angel reached out his staff and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the food, and then vanished from his sight.*

Psalms: *God, the Lord will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground.*

Matthew: *Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." They were astounded and said, "Then who can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible." Then Peter said, "Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" Jesus said to them, "You who have followed me will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or family or possessions for my name's sake will inherit eternal life."*