

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

St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - August 22, 2023

(The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary)

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 "They were greatly astounded. Then who can be saved? For God all things are possible."

Becoming Small Enough

Introduction

Forty years ago, we moved into a house that still had a milk chute. In days gone by, that was a little door on the outside of the house, that the milk man would open to deliver glass bottles of milk that had been previously ordered. The inside had a similar door for retrieving those bottles when the family woke up. One time we locked ourselves out of the house and came up with the idea that our six year old son would crawl in through the milk chute and open the door. He thought it was fun and was able to just fit in through that chute and unlock the door for us.

Matthew

I don't know why, after so many years, but this memory came back to me as I thought about today's gospel passage, which we proclaim at mass on a regular basis. Jesus explains to his disciples that anyone who is attached to his earthly riches will have locked themselves out of the kingdom of heaven. They will no more be able to enter than a camel can squeeze through the eye of a needle. That's a very graphic illustration of the fact that attachment to the things of the world will make us too big to fit. There won't be room for our possessions to get through that holy door. There won't be room for our egos to get through that door. We have to become smaller.

In a way, I think that this may be the answer to another teaching of Jesus. When the children were brought to him, and the adults prevented them from coming to Jesus, he was angry. Let the children come, he said. After blessing the children, he

told the adults that, unless they become as children, they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. That incident does not go on to tell us what it is about the children that will make heaven possible. But today we may have an answer. You have to be small like a child to fit through the narrow door and be saved. That doesn't mean you have to be physically small like a child. It means you need the innocence of the child, who has not yet become attached to riches, to earthly things. You have to recognize your smallness before God. If you have that attitude of humility, then, as Jesus says to the astounded disciples, "For God, all things are possible." The whole of his glorious kingdom will be open to you. You will gain a hundred times the things you have given up to make yourself small enough.

Jesus is concerned about wealth's ability to reduce our sense of dependency on God. The things we have can make us feel secure while keeping the Lord at arm's length. No amount of wealth or even good works will enable a person to reach eternal life. By the grace of God only can we receive what we could never achieve by nature. Only through that means can eternal life be ours.

The Queen of Heaven

Now we come to today's feast day, the Queenship of Mary. Church Tradition holds that once Mary, the Mother of God, was assumed body and soul into heaven at the end of her earthy life, she was crowned as Queen of Heaven and earth, to reign alongside her Son, Jesus the King of Kings. Not only is she small enough to enter the kingdom, but she is its queen. She is the prime example of one who receives a hundred fold what she gave up to be the mother of the Lord.

Even before the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption, it was understood that Mary has this role, this position in the kingdom of heaven. Blessed Pope Pius IX declared that: "Since she has been appointed by God to be Queen of heaven and earth, and is exalted above all the choirs of angels and saints, and even stands at the right hand of her only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, she presents our petitions in a most effective manner. When she asks, she obtains. Her pleas can never be unheard."

She made herself small enough to enter the kingdom. We know the exact moment that this happened, when she declared: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word."

Judges

Gideon was a faithful follower of God in a time of great turning away from God. The rest of Gideon's family were worshipping Baal. They even had a statue and an altar to that god in their family home. He was the last member of his family to remain faithful. Even though he is very discouraged by the apostasy around him, as we might be by the same loss of faith around us, it is because his heart had not grown cold towards God that he was able to recognize the angelic manifestation of God which came to visit him. 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."

Call To Conversion

Mary had asked the question: "How can this be since I am not married?" The angel told her that it would not be by any natural means but by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles asked the question: "Then who can be saved?" Jesus answered that for humans it is impossible, but for God, all things are possible. Gideon asked how he was going to rescue his people since he had no resources to do such a great thing. The angel of the Lord declared to him: "I will be with you." In each case, human strength and understanding and possessions are entirely inadequate for success in the kingdom of heaven. But God is always enough if we make room for him alone in our hearts.

Our possessions will make us too large to fit through the narrow gate. But if we make ourselves small enough, he will be our strength when we are weak. He will be our courage when we think the battle is lost. He will be our love when we feel most alone. He will be our joy, our peace, our success, our treasure, our salvation, all these things in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us follow our queen to him who accomplishes this.

Key Scripture Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *At your right hand stands the queen in robes of gold, finely arrayed.*

Collect: *O God, who made the mother of your Son to be our mother and queen, graciously grant that we may attain, by her intercession, the glory promised to your children.*

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."*