

Homily For Tuesday of the 23rd Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1

St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - September 10, 2019

Col 2:6-15 "When you were dead in trespasses, God made you alive together with him."

Psalms 145 "Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever."

Luke 6:12-19 "Jesus spent the night in prayer and, when day came, he called his disciples and chose 12."

Let Your Hearts Be Healed

Introduction

That is some serious prayer. All night. Outdoors. Up a mountain. Jesus went on retreat, giving up the human comfort of sleep so he could be energized in the Father's embrace, and enlightened to make the decision that would ultimately form the Church, the choosing of those who would lead it. I have heard of people entering into intense prayer when they have a significant decision to make. Personally, I feel more like the disciples who fall asleep when it comes to praying at night, whether in front of the Blessed sacrament at church or at home in a chair.

Luke

One can pray anywhere and I am sure Jesus did. But St. Luke makes sure we know the spiritual movement of Jesus is towards the father because he went **up** the mountain to pray.

The mountain always represents the heights from where God visits his people. It looks like Jesus had taken those disciples closest to him up the mountain, at least a certain way, because later they went down together to a level place, down to the people. It is God alone, in Jesus Christ, who leads us up the mountain to our heavenly father. And, it is God who has to come down to us.

Who is there on that level place where Jesus goes to meet them? It is a great crowd of his disciples, and a great multitude of people from all nations. It is too many to count. Christ's saving mission is to the whole world.

A great multitude includes those who are not yet disciples, some who from close by, those in Judea, which is primarily Jews. It includes those in Jerusalem, where the temple was. But it also includes those who are from Tyre and Sidon. Those are Gentile towns and, in Luke's passage, they represent the rest of the world, the 'ends of the earth' to whom the gospel will be proclaimed. All will be given the opportunity to become part of the great cloud of witnesses, his disciples.

It is really not just a geographical reference but meaning all people from all time, including us and our time. They are down below the mountain. They have not yet gone up the mountain into God's presence. They are not yet people who pray and have a relationship with God. Even the disciples need to learn this.

And why are we part of a multitude going to where Jesus is? Who is on the list? St. Luke tells us. it's the same list of categories of people today, who are longing for something that is missing in their lives. It is those who just want to hear Jesus. It is those who need healing from some kind of ailment/disease. It includes those who are "troubled by unclean spirits." They were all longing for something. And ALL in the crowd just wanted to get close enough to touch him.

Colossians

Paul is encouraging the Colossians to keep touching Jesus and not to be led away from the Gospel. "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, and not according to Christ."

Circumcision was the physical sign of participation in the covenant relationship with God. As always, God works with what is familiar to us and then invites us to a deeper experience of the mystery. Circumcision was practiced elsewhere in the ancient Middle East before it became a sign of the Israelite covenant with God.

People will sometimes say this means that women were left out. This is untrue. The old testament prophets consistently explained to the people that the outward sign, a mark on the body, was really intended to be lived out as a spiritual sign, using the strange image, circumcision of the heart. The outward sign meant very little if the inward one was not present.

Women were fully a part of the covenant relationship with God, even though the men of the family carried the physical mark on their bodies. With Jesus Christ Paul insists that Christ accomplishes in Baptism what circumcision only signified in ancient Israel. Baptism is the moment when God cuts away from our hearts the fleshly desires that keep us from loving and obeying him as we should.

Baptism is also the answer to the question of how it can be possible for everyone in the crowds can possibly touch Jesus. Through baptism and through faith and through the spiritual mark on our hearts, we unite ourselves to the one who wants to speak to us, to heal us of our infirmities, to bring peace to the troubled spirits within us.

Call to Action

Today we are troubled by many things, by many evil spirits. They gain influence in our lives through doorways that are opened, by us or other people or by things that have happened to us. Through these doors Satan's lies and deceptions limit our access to the blessing of the kingdom of God.

One is the spirit of entitlement. God asks that we give up our 'right' to prove we are worthy of the love He gives to us. Let go of the delusion that causes us to believe that God loves us and forgives us because of something we did, that we somehow deserve the mercy of God.

Another demonic spirit is unforgiveness. Are there sins for which we have not forgiven ourselves or others? Whatever those spirits are that trouble us, today God offers us once more the opportunity to surrender our whole selves, to reach out and touch him.

Jesus mounted the cross to bear the curses of the Old Covenant so that the blessings of the New could flow forth to the world. What do we need to nail to the cross: What worldly philosophies and lies have we let into our hearts. Today power will still come out of him and we will be healed if we will only touch him and let our troubled hearts be healed.