

Homily For the 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year C

St. Peter's 9:30/11:30 AM Masses - October 30, 2022

Wisdom 11:22-12:2 "You are merciful to all, and you overlook people's sins so that they may repent."

Psalms 145 "I will bless your name forever. Every day I will bless you, my king and my God."

2 Thess 1:11-2:2 "We beg you not to be quickly shaken in mind, or alarmed."

Luke 19:1-10 "Salvation has come to this house. The Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

First Comes Love

Introduction

Two men were best of friends all the time they grew up. For years they did everything together. In High School, they played the same sports and took the same courses. After that, they went their separate ways and moved to different cities, gradually losing contact entirely. Many years later, they happened to be in the same city. They were walking across a bridge from opposite sides. As they passed each other, there was a tiny look between them but nothing more and they continued on. Ten years after that, they were on the same bridge. As they passed each other, they both stopped and one exclaimed to the other, "I know you." The other replied, "Me too. We passed each other ten years ago on this bridge." To which the first man responded, "Yes, that's right." Both wished each other a good day and carried on, never to meet again, their childhood friendship forgotten.

Luke

St. Luke tells us that Jesus was passing through Jericho. That city is always a reminder of when the people of God first crossed the Jordan River and came into the land God had promised Abraham. Jesus always carries with him the promises of God. It says that Jesus was just passing through. God is always passing through our lives, giving us an opportunity to renew our friendship with him. If we don't recognize him as our friend and saviour, it will be our loss.

Many people had heard of Jesus and gathered to see him. Zacchaeus tried but couldn't get a ticket for the front row. And no one made room for him. The people were right about Zacchaeus. He was definitely a sinner. He was at the top of the pyramid scheme that was the Roman taxation system. Those Romans chose tax collectors from amongst the conquered nation. That man would ask for enough extra to provide his own salary. Many were dishonest and took more than they were due to make a larger profit.

So the people were right about him. But they were very wrong about something else. They were all sinners. They wouldn't like to hear it but the only really important difference between the rest of the people and Zacchaeus is that he knew he was a sinner in need of saving, and they did not. He is like the tax collector last week, who was praying in the temple, praying to God, "Have mercy on me, a sinner."

Zacchaeus was in trouble. Not because he was poor. Luke often writes about the troubles of people who are poor. He wasn't in trouble because he was short. It's not even because people hated him. Some people hated Jesus, but he kept loving. So what IS Zacchaeus' problem? It was that he had been living by what the world thinks is important and forgetting entirely his friendship with God. Remember when Jesus calls him a Son of Abraham? That means he was part of the people who had a special friendship with God. But all he was doing was cheating the others to get rich.

Like the others, Zacchaeus must have heard about Jesus. I don't think he knew he was going to give away a lot of his money, but that day he wanted more than anything to see Jesus. He was even willing to look foolish in front of all the people by climbing a tree.

Only those who are seeking Jesus will find him. Only those who know they are lost can be found. The amazing thing is that, when we finally begin to seek in earnest, we will realize that he has been seeking us all along. When we see him, we will notice that he sees us and has been looking at us with love. That's what happened to Zacchaeus that day.

Wisdom

God forgives sinners. The book of Wisdom, written long before Jesus, tells of the God who passes through our lives. He loves all things that he has made. If God made you, he will cherish you. He will never forget you. He loves us the way we are but he loves us too much to let us stay that way. That is why God calls sinners. Wisdom tells us that he points out our sins just little by little, so we will abandon our sins. What a great way to teach. I don't know about you, but I really appreciate that because change for the better is hard. I want to do it but it is a slow process.

The book of Wisdom tells us that the whole world is like a drop of morning dew to God. But every drop is precious. We are all like those drops of dew, small. Yet God's love for each of us makes us worthy to receive the blessings only God can give. In fact, we were made for that blessing. We don't have to earn it. We can't earn it. That would be silly. BUT, we do have to want it. No gift is properly received by one who does not want it.

God does not love things because things have wonderful qualities. Rather they have wonderful qualities because God loves them. God's love always comes first. That's what happened with Zacchaeus. The same with us. We are wonderful because God loves us, not because we are wonderful in ourselves. Even our goodness, even our desire for goodness is possible only because God loves us.

Call To Conversion

We can be short or tall, poor or rich. No one is outside of that love. Jesus wants to have supper with us in our house. Jesus is asking for permission to come right in to where you live, not your living room to watch TV and drink beer, but right into the centre of your existences.

St. Paul says not to get anxious. Jesus will come to you. Don't be frightened by the idea of having to give away so much. Zacchaeus had spent his whole life gathering all he could, cheating people and being hated for it. But, when Jesus came to his home, it was his joy to give it away all he had obtained through sin. We will never

be asked to give away what we want to keep for ourselves. God doesn't need anything we have, so we can't buy his love.

What would we give up to hear Jesus say, "Today salvation has come to this house. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost?" There is not a human being in whom God is not interested. If we show the least interest, Jesus is there in a flash. Hurry, Jesus tells Zacchaeus. Don't dawdle. Do it ASAP.

When you hear the call from Christ, hurry down. Jesus means to move in to your house. Not just part of it. Not just the parts that we think are ok for the world to see. Not just the parts we would post on Facebook or Instagram. He wants to take over every room in our house, every part of our personal life. He wants to be Lord of our life. Salvation can come to your house if you are ready to welcome him in.

Jesus Christ passes through our life and calls us by name, because He loves you and He wants to save you. St. Ambrose says that, "As Zacchaeus climbed up that tree to see Jesus better, you can now climb up to the Cross along with Jesus and you will know who He is, you will know the immensity of His love."

First comes his love for us. Then comes our repentance. Then comes forgiveness and joy as we allow our saviour and friend to move in and make us holy from the inside. That's the order of things.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Forsake me not, O Lord, my God. Be not far from me, my strong salvation.*

Collect: *Almighty and merciful God, by whose gift your faithful offer you right and praiseworthy service ..*

Wisdom: *The whole world before you is like a drop of morning dew that falls on the ground. But you are merciful to all, and you overlook people's sins so that they may repent. Lord, you love all things that exist, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it.*

Psalm: *I will bless your name for ever, my king and my God. Every day I will bless you. The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your faithful shall bless you. The Lord is faithful in all his words. The Lord upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.*

2 Thessalonians: *Brothers and sisters, we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call, and will fulfill by his power every good resolve and work of faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in him. As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we beg you not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, as though (we have said) the day of the Lord is already here.*

Luke: *Jesus was passing through Jericho. A man there named Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector and rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but could not because he was short. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree because Jesus was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So Zacchaeus hurried down and was happy to welcome Jesus. All who saw it grumbled saying, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." Zacchaeus said to the Lord, "Half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor. And, if I have defrauded anyone, I will pay back four times as much." The Jesus said of him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because Zacchaeus is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."*