

Homily For Tuesday of the 32nd Week of Ordinary Time- Year II

St Peter's 8:30am Mass - Nov 10, 2020

(Memorial of St. Leo the Great)

Titus 2:1-8,11-14 "The grace of God is training us to renounce worldly passions and to live lives of godliness."

Ps 37:3-4,18-29 "Trust in the Lord and do good ... so you shall inherit the land forever."

Luke 17: 7-10 "Do you thank a servant for following commands? So you have done only what you ought."

Teaching the Truth

Introduction

One of the great questions of the Gospels, I think, is why Jesus could not do any miracles at Nazareth, his home town. (Mark 6) This is a profound point in his ministry because, up to then, we would surely think of Jesus as zapping people with a magic wand and they would be well, and punching demons in the mouth and out they go.

It was as if there was some Nazareth kryptonite that robbed him of his power. But there we learned more about how God's power is manifested. It turns out that there also had to be faith and a desire to be healed. In Nazareth they had neither because, to them, he was just the carpenter's son, not the divine master.

It was exactly the same for Jesus' **teaching**. If someone did not have a certain openness of heart to hear the truth about the Kingdom of God, no amount of beautiful words were going to make it happen.

Socrates was the greatest of the Greek teacher/philosophers. He declared: I cannot teach you anything, but I can make you think. But in Matthew 13, Jesus said about teaching those who are hard of heart: The reason I speak to them in parables is that, hearing, they do not listen, nor do they understand. If they did listen with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.

Luke

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus invites his disciples to consider the relationship between a household master and the servants. Even if those servants have been out working the fields or the sheep, they don't get to come home and be served first by the master.

This is not a story about contemporary employee/employer relations. It's a lesson about recognizing the one from whom every blessing comes. Unlike the CEO of the company, or the boss of the work unit, the master of all does not thank the servants. He does not need them like a boss needs an employee. He does not need anything. It is the servants who need to be thankful if they are to truly appreciate the gifts of the master's goodness.

This is different than how the world works. We expect thanks for what we do and sometimes won't do anything unless we get that thanks. The lesson, if we have ears to hear it, is that Christians should not expect praise and honour for performing those duties that we are obligated to perform. Our efforts are not so that we can be thanked, but so that we will be content to serve in God's household. No one can fully repay God for his gifts. We can only receive them as servants of the one true God.

Edmund Hillary is the one first credited with climbing Mt Everest, in May of 1953, accompanied by his servant and friend on the expedition, Tenzing Norgay. Hillary describes how disaster threatened when he slipped and fell, and was left hanging by a rope over a huge crevasse. It required skill, strength and bravery for Norgay to rescue him. Hillary was describing this event in a talk, but didn't mention his gratitude. Someone from the audience asked if he thanked his climbing partner for saving his life. Hillary's response? Thank him for saving me? I would have been damn mad if he didn't.

Tomorrow, we will remember those who did not hold back, who risked everything. We will thank them. It sounds harsh, but God will not. However, he will offer them the reward of resurrected life, joined to Jesus Christ who held

nothing back for all of humanity, for those who would be grateful for so great a gift, but also for those who would not.

St. Leo the Great, a 4th century pope and Doctor of the Church, whom we celebrate today, understood the relationship. He said: Do not dwell on your unworthiness but remember Peter who overflowed with graces, yet shared everything. He points to the model of the first pope, who learned to trust in the master and to carry out his task without thanks.

Titus

Paul's instructions to Titus are a master class in how to teach the Good News of Jesus Christ. Titus was a highly trusted associate of Paul, given the task of teaching the faithful on the island of Crete. Paul, an Apostle, appointed Titus for this work. He gave him his authority to teach. He didn't thank him for it. He commissioned him to do what he was asked.

What was that commission? It begins with his own life, which was to be consistent with his preaching, so that he would not make the faith a cause for disgrace. He was to serve the master by teaching true doctrine, by teaching what is good, by teaching with seriousness and not to discredit God's word. He was also to teach everyone in the community how, themselves, to teach right Christian living to others. The obligation of older men and women especially was to be good leaders, to model proper behaviour and to oblige youth to live properly.

All are called to be leaders of virtue in the community, to teach what they have come to know as godly attributes, and to witness to those outside the church what Christian behaviour looks like. Later in the passage, the Greek word for Epiphany is used. The Christian acts in a way to both reveal or manifest God in some way by godlike behaviour, but also to prepare for the coming final Epiphany of Christ in glory. The duty of all Christians is to live lives that are self controlled, upright and godly.

Today, there is no greater lesson to learn than hearing Jesus say to each of us: If you listen with your heart and turn, I would heal you. Well done good and faithful servant.

Key Passages

Collect: *O God, who never allow the gates of hell to prevail against your Church, firmly founded on the apostolic rock, grant her, we pray, that through the intercession of Pope Saint Leo, she may stand firm in your truth and know the protection of lasting peace.*

Titus: *Teach what is consistent with sound doctrine. Tell the older men to be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Tell the older women to be reverent, to teach what is good so that they may encourage the young women to love their families ... so that the word of God may not be discredited. Urge the younger men to be self controlled. Show yourself a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech. then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us. For the grace of God, bringing salvation to all, is training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions and to live lives of self control and godliness ... Jesus Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify a people zealous for good deeds.*

Psalms: *Trust in the Lord and do good, so you will enjoy security. Depart from evil, and do good so you shall inherit the land forever.*

Luke: *Jesus said to his disciples: Who among you would say to your slave (servant) after his work, take your place at the table at the table? Would you not rather say: Prepare supper and serve me. Later you may eat and drink? Do you thank the servant for doing what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say: We are unworthy servants. We have done only what we ought to have done!*

St. Leo: *No one, however weak, is beyond the help of the prayer of Christ ... As a deacon he worked to bring peace to warring Roman factions. Well known for his peacekeeping efforts, and especially for persuading Attila the Hun not plunder Rome. Leo worked alongside the people to rebuild the city and its churches. Best known for his sermons on faith and charity ... Do not dwell on the thought of our unworthiness. It is more helpful to study the blessed apostle Peter. Though he overflowed with the very source of all graces, nothing was given over to him without his sharing it.*