

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

St Peter's 8:30am Mass- Nov 13, 2018

Titus 2: 1-8, 11-14 "Live ... upright and godly lives ... while we wait for our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Psalms 37 "The salvation of the just comes from the Lord."

Luke 17: 7-10 "We are worthless slaves. We have done only what we ought to have done."

Intro

One of the most popular books of all time, on being successful, was Steven Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. His way of synthesizing, of putting together, principles of success was adopted by individuals and organizations everywhere. Covey likely included his Mormon perspective on Jesus Christ in his ideas. However, anything in it which could be taken as a spiritual principle was lost in the intense rush towards worldly success. I'm not saying Covey's book was bad. In fact, I want to use one of the principles, one of the highly effective habits, to approach today's readings. His 2nd of 7 principles is "Begin with the end in mind." It sounds simple, as Covey's habits are. If you want to do the things that successful people do, you first need to know what success would look like, what you are aiming at.

Paul's Instruction to Titus

I imagine that if St Paul was Steven Covey, he would have started with where we are headed as Christians, instead of with long lists of Christian virtues and good behaviour. We read at the end of today's passage from his letter to Titus: "Jesus Christ gave himself for us, so that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own, who are zealous for good deeds." So, what is the end that we should have in mind? First, it is about Jesus. That shouldn't surprise us. Second, he gave himself to redeem us. That's his death and resurrection to which we join ourselves, the goal of all Christian life. That's the meaning of our baptism, which we are to live out every day. Finally, so that we can be purified and become zealous to do what is good.

Psalm 37

Each verse in the psalm follows a pattern: Do good? Enjoy security in the land. Be blameless? Abide forever. Both avoid evil *and* do good? Inherit the land and live forever.

If the psalmist was Steven Covey, he might have begun with what God wants to give us as an unmerited gift, not as a reward for goodness. As the catechism puts it in paragraph one, at the *beginning*, God's plan of sheer goodness is that we would share in his own blessed life. Our *response* to that plan of sheer goodness is to avoid evil and do good. That's what a disciple does. That is what God's people do. We don't begin with behaving well in order to receive a reward. At least that is the principle of the Gospel passage.

The Gospel Imperative

If Jesus was Steven Covey, he would have given us something to entice us in this passage about being a good slave, perhaps to soften the blow of being called slaves, who just do their duty over and over again without any breaks and without praise.

Or, perhaps more accurately, if St Luke was Steven Covey, he would have written it up so that we would know why we should be good servants (slaves in our translation) and not expect pats on the back. I don't know about you, but I like those pats on the back.

Call To Action

With the end in mind, we stop worrying so much about being successful, about being praised for 'being good', and getting what belongs to us.

With the end in mind, being proud towards God loses all its attraction. Our Christian duty, to do what a disciple does, begins to take on an attraction of its own. Soon we will hear an angel tell Mary the end that God has in mind: "You will bear a son ... and his kingdom will have no end." The psalmist is right- a place and life without end. And we will hear Mary respond: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me according to your word."

There is a long list of virtues for us to choose from once we know the end towards which our goodness can be directed. Today, we could pick one that fits our lives:

For older men: be temperate, serious, prudent, faithful, loving, persevering

For older women: be reverent, not slandering, teaching good to the young, loving children and husband, being good managers

For younger men: be self controlled, do good works, have integrity, behave well in speech and action.

For all: live lives that are self controlled, upright and godly.

Why should we do these things? When we begin with the end in mind, we see that God has prepared a place for us. God has come to us in the flesh so that he could take us to be with him, to live forever in the land, the kingdom, of eternal blessedness. We don't earn that place. We stop expecting it as some human right we are so fond of invoking. Instead, it becomes for us the blessed vision which informs and gives life to all our good deeds and behaviours.