

Homily For Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter - Year I

St Peter's 8:30am Mass- May 21, 2019

Acts 14:19-28 "They stoned Paul (and left him for) dead ... Through persecutions we enter the kingdom."

Psalms 145:10-21 "O Lord, your faithful shall speak of the glory of your kingdom."

John 14:27-31 "The hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father ... Peace I leave you."

The Hour For Peace Has Come To Us

Introduction

Have a nice day! How many times do we hear that when we are out and about? What I have noticed about myself is that I don't initiate that interaction but I do respond with, "Thanks, you too." We are a polite people in general. There is probably a sense that we usually mean it, at least to some extent. I would like to answer with something more meaningful, maybe something like: "Peace of Christ, not like the world gives." Wouldn't it be fun to see the look on the cashier at the grocery store? Well, actually there is already a greeting that expresses something more. That's 'Shalom'. It expresses a desire for harmony and spiritual wellbeing.

Peace

When Jesus says, "I am going to the Father. My peace I leave you," he isn't just saying 'have a nice day' or even 'have a nice life'. It's not a wish for nice weather or lack of conflict or even the end of a pandemic. It is a full and deeply satisfying relationship with God and those nearby.

But the question remains how that shalom is possible when Jesus is about to be betrayed, tortured and executed on a cross. Well, he is God so maybe that's not so tough for him. But, he is also human, with our fears. St. Paul says in Philippians 2, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." What is that mind?

There are many clues in today's Gospel passage. His hour had come to go to the Father. He is going home to that perfect loving union. It's HIS hour. It's his destiny. It's time for the saving plan of God to have its fullest expression. And, even though Satan has control in the world, he can't change that. He can only gloat

over the suffering that he will cause. Do we hear this in our lives? The ruler of this world has no power to prevent the peace of Christ, his personal shalom. On Easter night, after the resurrection, Jesus will say: Peace be with you. Receive the Spirit. This is the peace of being freed from sin and united to God.

No matter how many times I go to the fridge or the pantry during the day because I think I am hungry, I won't get this kind of peace. Only if I recognize and accept the longing that is in me for unity with God will I be satisfied.

Persecution

We hear today that Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra. Paul had just healed a crippled man. The people there wanted to proclaim him a god. But their desire for truly satisfying relationship was fickle. As soon as others came with convincing words, they became a violent mob and stoned Paul right there in the streets. There is no peace there but only desperation.

Compare Paul and Barnabas to those who came from nearby cities, incited people to mob violence, then are not heard from again, probably gone by the time they come back to Lystra, to encourage the disciples and ordain priests.

The intent of stoning was death and it usually was fatal. Paul confirms this stoning in 2 Corinthians, also that he was shipwrecked three times, usually as fatal as an airplane crash. But he is miraculously healed and carries on to other cities. Just as Jesus went to Jerusalem that last time, knowing the hatred waiting there for him, Paul and Barnabas go back to Lystra to encourage the believers and to ordain priests to shepherd the church there. That seems crazy to the world, but they have shalom. In fact, they tell people it's going to be like that with persecution and trials to enter the kingdom, where Jesus and the Father are united in perfect love.

Call To Action

A Nobel prize-winning Psychologist says most people don't really want to be happy. Daniel Kahneman distinguishes between a kind of fleeting happiness with long term and deep satisfaction with one's life. Even as a secular commentator,

he recognizes that there is something more that we can aspire to but he still thinks it's in worldly goals. He also says he doesn't consider his existence meaningful, despite his notable academic accomplishments.

After the celebrant offers the peace at mass, in preparation for the reception of the Eucharist, there is an invitation to offer that peace to one another. We have been reluctant to do this out of fear that people in congregations may greet one another in an unsafe manner. Fear has tended to limit our confidence that the peace of Christ is the highest happiness that can be experienced.

The psalm today reads like an evangelizer's manifesto: "O Lord, your faithful shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power. They make known to all people your mighty deeds." The psalmist has shalom. That's our task, but also our invitation. With the peace of Christ, we too can tell what God has done, and speak the praise of the Lord so that all flesh will bless his holy name forever. May you have 'shalom' today.

Key Passages

Collect: *O God, that we may never doubt the promises of which we have learned from you.*

Acts: *At Lystra, some Jews came from Antioch and won over the crowds. Then they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples surrounded him, he got up. The next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. Paul and Barnabas made many disciples there. . Back in Antioch they encouraged the disciples, saying: "It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God." Back to Antioch where they started, they related all that God had done with them.*

Psalm: *O Lord, your faithful shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power. They make known to all people your mighty deeds.*

John: *When the hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father, Jesus said: "Peace I leave with you, not as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid. If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father. I have told you this so that when it occurs, you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me, but I do as the Father has commanded.*