

## **Homily For Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent - Year II**

### **St Peter's 8:30 am Mass - Friday, March 22, 2024**

**Jeremiah 20:10-13** "O Lord, you have seduced (enticed) me. You have overpowered me."

**Psalms 18:1-6** "The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God in whom I take refuge."

**John 10:31-42** "For which of my many good works are you going to stone me?"

### **Unity of God With His Works**

#### **Introduction**

In the face of the evil that Jesus and the prophet Jeremiah and even the psalmist experience, it can be very helpful to go back to the beginning, even back to creation itself. We find out there that all of creation is good. There is no evil. And human life has an extra dose of that goodness. It is created 'very' good. Very early on, in the second creation account, we find out the first thing that is not good. Adam is alone. With the woman Eve, God's final act of bringing into being, God creates the best thing of all, not just the woman but an intimate relationship.

That intimacy, that closeness, is a direct reflection and manifestation of the intimacy they share with God, whom Jeremiah calls 'the Lord of hosts', and whom Jesus calls 'the Father'. Both of these names for God tell us about the nature of God. Our God is the one who brings things together. He is the one who reconciles people to each other and to himself. He integrates and unites.

So, this is a context for today's scriptures. Evil happens when things break apart, when they dis-integrate. Disintegration is not of God. Satan's temptation at the beginning is for Adam and Eve is to separate their intimate relationship with God from their natural desires. God asks only one act of obedience: Don't eat from that tree. But the temptation is to separate that obedience from their purely natural desire for what is good. In that moment, the fruit from the tree looks good, but to eat it is an act of separation from God.

## **Jeremiah**

What is the terrible thing that causes Jeremiah to cry out to the Lord. He spoke what he had heard from God, in obedience. But his closest friends, with whom he was in relationship, betray him. The 14th century poet, Dante, gets it right in his portrayal of hell. He reserves the lowest level of hell for those who have betrayed someone. This is the breaking apart of what was meant to be united.

Now, even Jeremiah's closest 'friends' want to trap him in his words, to shame him, make him look bad, and even to kill him. In this way, Jeremiah shows us, by his experience, what will happen to Christ himself, who will be betrayed by one of his closest friends. Jeremiah is a sign of the opposition to the one who will come. But Jeremiah knows that the only solution to the disintegration perpetrated by his friends at hearing the word of God, is to declare that he will not be dismayed but will trust in the Lord. He unites himself to the Lord. He points forward to the one who will have perfect unity and perfect intimacy with the God he calls 'abba' Father.

## **John**

Jesus declares to the people that the works he does are from the Father. Five times in this Gospel passage, Jesus refers to the Father. Five times!! But those who condemn Jesus separate the works Jesus performs from God. They say: Yeah, we agree that those works are good. We don't condemn you for them but for calling yourself God. Separation. Dis-integration. Breaking apart. Clearly the things Jesus does can only be done by the power of God. They know this, in the same way that Adam and Eve know that their obedience is the sign of their relationship with God. They know and yet they separate the works from God who does them.

This is why evil makes no sense. It is based on a strange logic. We know that you do the works that only God can do, yet we condemn you for claiming to be the God who does those works. This is the logic of the world even today. Even when the world seems open to Jesus, it wants the nice Jesus - his good works - without the cross. That's too hard. Let's take the good works and kill the one who does

them. The world separates the unborn fetus from the child, the father from his families. The procreative act from the marriage relationship

### **Call To Conversion**

What does Jesus do in the face of opposition and betrayal? He goes to the Jordan River where John was baptizing and where the people had entered the land of God's promise. Jesus goes there as the new covenant sign that he is the way to the way to the promised salvation of all those who will come to believe in him. And, as it tells us, many came to believe in him.

Now it is our turn. What do we do in the face of opposition and even betrayal? Let us also cry out to God. Let us unite ourselves to the intimate relationship Jesus has with the Father. Today, Friday, with just one week left to Good Friday, the Gospel tells us that even in the ways that the world seeks to separate us from God, Jesus uses their punishment, the cross, to do what? What does he say? When I am lifted up (on the cross) I will draw all people to myself. So this is our Good News as we approach the cross on Good Friday. Satan's plan to separate Christ from our salvation, Jesus uses it instead to unite us, to bring us to himself, to reintegrate us into his loving embrace. That is why we pray, crying out to God like Jeremiah. That is why we fast from division and disintegration. That is why we give to the poor, to unite us to those whom God loves the most.

## **Key Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in distress. Let me never be put to shame, for I call on you.*

**Collect:** *Pardon the offences of your peoples, O Lord, and in your goodness set us free from the bonds of the sins we have committed in our weakness.*

**Jeremiah:** *In distress Jeremiah raised his voice: "O Lord, you have enticed me. You have overpowered me. I have become a laughingstock. I hear many whispering: "Let us denounce him." All my close friends are watching for me to stumble: "Perhaps we can prevail against him and take our revenge." But the Lord is with me. My persecutors will stumble. Their eternal dishonour will never be forgotten. O Lord of Hosts, you test the righteous. You see the heart and the mind.*

**Psalms:** *I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God in whom I take refuge. I call upon the Lord. In my distress I called upon the Lord. To my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice. .*

**John:** *The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus replied, "For which of many good works are you going to stone me?" They answered, "It is not for a good work but for blasphemy, because you are making yourself God." Jesus answered, "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, believe the works, so that you may know that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." They tried to arrest Jesus but he went away to the place where John had been baptizing. Many came to Jesus saying: John performed no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." And many believed in him there.*