

Homily For Tuesday of the First Week of Lent - Year I

St Peter's 8:30am Mass- Tuesday, March 12, 2019

Isaiah 55: 10-11 "My word shall not return to me empty, but shall accomplish that which I purpose."

Psalms 34 "The Lord is near to the broken hearted."

Matthew 6: 7-15 "Your Father knows what you need before you ask. Pray in this way: Our Father ..."

Introduction

I will never forget old Mr. Wallace. He was our neighbour across the lane when we moved in. I was preparing my first big garden and I would ask him questions about growing vegetables in the back yard. He had done it all his life and he sure knew how, but he would say "I just prepare the soil and plant the seeds. God does all the rest. Without him nothing happens." At this time of year I so look forward to that rain soaking into the soil I will prepare in my garden

Isaiah

It is a beautiful image, isn't it?. Isaiah, at the end of what is called The Book of Consolation, explains that God's Word is like rain falling from the heavens. It will not be denied. It will set life in motion. That's what it does without fail because that is its purpose.

We just finished responding to "The Word of the Lord" with "Thanks be to God." And we responded to "The Gospel of the Lord" with "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ." Our response indicates our belief that there must be something about God's Word. But it is always going to be somewhat of a mystery, isn't it? In the verses immediately preceding, God says "My thoughts and my ways are as high above yours as the heavens are above the earth." We will always be looking up in wonder and awe at the ways of God.

My word, God says, will accomplish what I purpose. That's an odd word. Purpose is not propose, which needs approval. Purpose is that it WILL do what God intends. God's will is always accomplished. And God's purpose is his plan of salvation for humanity. We can cooperate with God's plan of salvation, which is

his Word. Or we can try to mess it up. And we do try, it seems. Joseph and Mary cooperated with God's word and he furthered his plan through them. Herod opposed the plan, but God furthered that plan through him anyway.

Matthew

Of course, we can know what God's word is because we have come to know and it has been revealed to us that God's living word is a man, Jesus Christ. It becomes clear that he is the one with whom we cooperate or whom we oppose. Today, Jesus makes clear that our prayer life is part of that cooperation or opposition.

Don't heap up empty phrases. Stop bugging God with your long list of intentions. He already knows what they are so stop trying to make sure your list is comprehensive. We tend to assume that if we don't get it perfect, it won't happen. That kind of makes it dependent on us instead of on God. But your Father in heaven knows what you need.

Jesus himself prayed the psalms. He is not saying don't pray but don't think that more words is better. Keep it simple. Here today we have the prayer of all prayers introduced to us once again.

What To Pray

The Our Father has six statements or petitions: Our Father in heaven, your name is holy, let your kingdom take hold, grant us what we need every day, forgive our sins, and keep us from temptation to sin. These could be considered the fundamentals of our prayer life.

In this passage, Jesus pays special attention to forgiveness. If you don't forgive, your Father in heaven will not forgive you. It sounds harsh, like an ultimatum from God, but it really means we can't experience the freedom and the intimacy with God that forgiveness offers until we let go of our hostility.

Adam and Eve had intimacy with God before they lost it. We experience the consequences of that loss. That intimacy is to be restored by God's plan of salvation, by his Word, which is Jesus Christ. God's Son IS the plan of Salvation, the eternal Word and creative power of God, who would come down from

heaven to restore us to intimacy. And HE WOULD NOT FAIL to accomplish this task. He would not return to the Father until he had accomplished that purpose for which he became man.

Call To Action

And what does that Word recommend for participation in the plan? Pray! But not with a heaped up pile of words, as if you were making sand bags to protect against a flood. No, it would be with our hearts.

Prayer is one of the big three for Lent. It is intimacy with God. It is bracketed on one side by almsgiving, which is a focus on the needs of others. That's why not to get rewarded for it, because then the focus is on us. On the other side, supporting prayer, is fasting. That is sacrifice, which prepares us for prayer.

Today, we pray once more the Our Father. We let our prayer be simple. We plead for a new intimacy with God, knowing that his Word will not fail in us.