

Homily for Thursday in the 30th Week of Ordinary Time

Ephesians 6:10–20 Psalm 144:1b, 2, 9–10

Luke 13:31–35

“Our Spiritual Google”

I am a south side boy. By that I mean, I live on the south side of the Bow and prior to coming to St. Peters had always worked in the south east or south west. So now that I am here in the northwest I have never been as appreciative of Google Maps. Now when I go to visit someone, in what to me is this foreign quadrant, I enter the address where I am going and let Ms. Google take over. Without Google Maps I would be trying to read those old hard copy books maps, through my glasses and try to see the road, over the top of my glasses, because I need these for reading and need to be glasses free for distance vision.

Google makes my life a whole lot easier because I am immediately orientated and then am given clear directions.

Our readings for today are to our spiritual life what google maps are to my commuting life. They help to both orientate our lives and direct them. So let's open up the app and get started.

In the Gospel we hear Jesus say in response to the Pharisees' concern for the Lord's safety because of the plotting of King Herod.

“Go and tell that fox for me”

Now for the Jews a fox was a derogatory term and was a symbol of three things. First, it was regarded as the slyest of animals. Second, it was regarded as the most destructive of animals. Third, it was the symbol of a worthless and insignificant man¹.

Let's turn now to the Epistle where St. Paul writes:

For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places

Both of these texts help orientate us. Within the world there are often rulers who are deceptive, sly and insignificant men when seen in comparison to the kingdom of God and people who desire the way of holiness. History is replete with cagy rulers, who like Herod, are self-serving and coy. One has only to look at what is happening in the American election campaign to see evidence of such foxy maneuvering.

Why is this? Because we live in a world that Paul describes as this present darkness. We live in a physical world that has unseen spiritual forces that are also sly and cunning. Paul calls them “cosmic powers” that rule with authority.

¹ Barclay, W. (2001). *The Gospel of Luke* (p. 220). Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press.

Back in chapter 2, St. Paul talks about the influence of these powers in peoples' lives in this way:

People are following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.³ Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.²

Paul refers to these forces as having dominion in the lives of people who most often, unknowingly are under their influence as they live in the passions of their flesh, as they follow their own desires both in body and mind.

When we know our orientation and recognize that there is a lot more going on in this world than meets the eye because of the spiritual forces at work within the soul of each person, we can then hear the words that give direction to our lives.

Rather than living according to the desires of the body and mind, those who are in Jesus Christ, a term Paul uses repeatedly in his Epistles, are able to find shelter under his protective wing. Jesus longs for us to come to him for this protection so that he can then direct us how to live in a world defined as the "present darkness"

This is where Paul's words to us are so instructive because they give us the direction we need. With the description of the Christian armour he gives us six practices or attitudes that are to direct how we live

1. The belt of truth: base all you say and do on the gospel truth.
2. The breastplate righteousness: conduct yourself righteously, united to Christ.
3. The footwear of the Gospel of peace: always be ready to share the gospel.
4. The shield of faith: when troubles come, put your faith in God and his word.
5. The helmet salvation: hope in God's salvation, no matter what.
6. The sword of the Spirit – which is the word of God: listen to the word of God and proclaim it to advance Christ's kingdom.³

As we cultivate a life where we are being transformed by Jesus and not conformed to this present darkness we will be able to live with a purposefulness and direction that allows us to tap into a source even more important than google maps. For while it is helpful to find my way around the northwest, what you and I really need is help finding our way through a confusing to distracting world.

² *The Holy Bible*. (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Eph 2:2–3). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

³ Williamson, P. S. (2009). *Ephesians* (p. 198). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.