

Thy Will be Done

Homily for Thursday, April 28, 2022

Thursday Easter 2

The writer C.S. Lewis once wrote:

“There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, “Thy will be done,” and those to whom God says, in the end, “Thy will be done.” All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. Those who knock it is opened.”

This observation by Lewis helps us to understand what Jesus means when at the end of today’s Gospel he says:

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God’s wrath.

The first part of this saying “He who believes in the Son of God has eternal life” is the kind of person who says to God “Thy will be done”. This is the kind of person who seriously and constantly desires joy and so will never miss it. If we make it our daily desire to trust in Jesus and do his will we will find the true meaning of our lives, a meaning expressed so clearly by St Peter when he said in the first reading:

“We must obey God rather than men”

This is a the very kind of obedience Jesus is talking about in the Gospel when he shares with us that the witness he is bearing is a heavenly one and comes from the our Father who is in heaven. But notice he says that for so many, they don’t want to pay attention to this witness.

He testifies to what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his testimony. 33 Whoever has accepted his testimony has certified this, that God is true.

This is a strange saying. In the first part of it Jesus says that no one receives his testimony but then says “whoever has accepted his testimony”. What does he mean by this? Jesus is using exaggeration to make a point and it is this. There are so many people who live their lives without discovering the true meaning and purpose of their lives. These are the ones who will not receive the testimony of Jesus and will not say “thy will be done” to Jesus. However there are some, much fewer in number, who do discover the meaning of life is realized when we can say God is true and I want to do his will. All who earnestly seek him in this way will in the words of C.S. Lewis “desire joy and will discover joy”. Now joy is not just happiness, it is much deeper than that. It is that sense of knowing I am living my life with a God given purpose and direction and although the life of discipleship,(that is saying yes to Jesus) is hard, it is also so good to know I am living my life for God. Jesus says that people who live this way are living eternal life right now in this world. Why, because such people are living from above, that is with a heavenly perspective.

This is so different from those of whom Jesus says:

he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.

These are the kinds of people of whom C.S. Lewis observed:

and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done." All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell.

See how this plays out in our reading from Acts. St Peter who had been filled with cowardice on Holy Thursday when he betrayed Jesus now speaks with a trusting confidence by declaring "God exalted Jesus at his right hand as Leader and Saviour"

Peter knows with absolute conviction that Jesus is the one who has and is saving Peter from himself and is now leading and guiding the life of the early Christian community. Conversely the members of the council react to this message filled with rage and have homicidal intentions. Two responses to the same Jesus that couldn't be more polarized.

We find joy and heaven when we say to God "Thy will be done". We find despair and hell when we hear God say to us "Thy will be done". The wrath of God that Jesus speaks of here is a way of saying that God gives people over to themselves. If they do not want to live in accordance with God and his will then theirs will be a life that will be hell on earth and quite possibly hell for ever after.

May we therefore ever more intentionally say "We must obey God rather than man and so be people who truly mean it when we pray: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.