

HOMILY FOR DECEMBER 11, 2020

THE ROOTED LIFE

JESUS was saddened by the fickleness of human nature. To him, men and women seemed to be like children playing in the village square. One group said to the other: 'Come on and let's play at weddings,' and the others said: 'We don't feel like being happy today.' Then the first group said: 'All right; come on and let's play at funerals,' and the others said: 'We don't feel like being sad today.' No matter what was suggested, they did not want to do it; and no matter what was offered, they found a fault in it. How easy it is to be fault finders; how much more challenging to live a life rooted in Jesus.

John came, living in the desert, fasting and despising food, isolated from the society of others; and they said of him: 'The man is mad to cut himself off from human society and human pleasures like that.' Jesus came, mixing with all kinds of people, sharing in their sorrows and their joys, keeping company with them in their times of joy; and they said of him: 'He is a socialite; he is a party-goer; he is the friend of outsiders with whom no decent person would have anything to do.' They called John's self-denial madness; and they called Jesus' sociability laxness of morals. They could find grounds for criticism either way.

The plain fact is that when people do not want to listen to the truth, they will easily enough find an excuse for not listening to it. They do not even try to be consistent in their criticisms; they will criticize the same person, and the same institution, from quite opposite grounds. If people are determined to make no response, they will remain stubbornly unresponsive no matter what invitation is made to them. Jesus is saying today grown men and women can be very like spoiled children who refuse to play no matter what the game is.

Then comes Jesus' final sentence in this section: 'Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.' The ultimate verdict lies not with the cantankerous and perverse critics but with events. The Jewish leaders might criticize John for his lonely isolation, but John had moved the hearts of men and women to God as they had not been moved for centuries; they might criticize Jesus for mixing too much in ordinary life and with ordinary people, but in him people were finding a new life and a new goodness and a new power to live as they ought and a new access to God.

Friends, how easy it can be for us to be critical, and the result is fruitless. How much more beneficial to our souls to each day look to the wisdom of Jesus and in the words of our reading from Isaiah ask for our redeemer to teach us for our own good; thus directing us in the way that leads to life and true prosperity. For we do not want to be fickle but rooted so that in the words of today's psalm we can be like:

*like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do, they prosper.¹*

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Ps 1:3). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.