

Homily for December 15, 2021

Where Righteousness Dwells

The beautiful poetry expressed by Isaiah and the Psalmist today speak of two interrelated themes. The righteousness of God which is to result in our salvation.

Listen again to how this is celebrated in Isaiah:

Show, O heavens, from above and let the skies rain down righteousness; let the earth open up, that salvation may spring up, and let it cause righteousness to sprout up also, I the Lord have created it.

The psalmist sings:

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

When we think of God's righteousness we are celebrating his right ordering of the world in which we live. During the Advent Season we think of this in relation to the coming of Jesus. Two thousand years ago righteousness didn't only look down from the sky, but the righteous one came among us. During Advent we think as well of the Lord's Second Coming when all will be made right and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. St Peter in his 2nd letter says of this time:

According to his promise, we wait a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

So while with the Lord's first coming the righteous one came among us and with the 2nd coming righteousness will be everywhere present because all evil will be eradicated and true mercy, justice and peace will reign, for now, the righteous one can dwell in the hearts of those who receive him. This is why Isaiah celebrates how the influence of the rain of righteousness can touch our lives so that salvation can spring up, so that even now in this world we can learn, by grace to order our lives according to God's righteous rule.

So what does the psalmist envision will be the result of our receiving the righteous one into our lives in the present? Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet, righteousness and peace will kiss each other, and faithfulness will spring up from the ground. To put it another way, those who are being saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus are increasingly embodying the characteristics native to the citizens of heaven while we continue to live here on earth. There is a constancy and reliability that characterizes how we live, expressed by the pair "steadfast love and faithfulness". There is a contentment we come to know because God's righteous rule is establishing a peace in our hearts, a peace Jesus says, "the world cannot give".

And through it all we will remain trusting in the Lord even though there are times when like John the Baptist we may question if Jesus really is the one who came from heaven down to earth, because life is marked by such hardship and the evil one seems to hold the trump card.

But here is the thing St John the Baptist shows us. That even though he questioned if Jesus was the one, he lived to the end a life marked by constancy and reliability. May his example enable us to recognize that even if there are times we doubt the fullness of the faith of what Jesus taught, lived and died for, we can always allow Jesus that space to come more fully into our lives, so that while imperfectly now we hope will one day be fully realized. We are celebrate and share now in Jesus' righteous kingdom so as to be saved to share in it completely in the new heaven and earth will righteousness will be fully at home.