

Homily for 23<sup>rd</sup> Week of Ordinary Time  
Tuesday September 11, 2018  
1 Corinthians 6:1–11  
Psalm 149:1b–6a, 9b  
Luke 6:12–19

Today's readings highlight for us the story of two kingdoms. There is the kingdom of this world that is obvious to all and is marked by self-centred and self-serving values. There is the Kingdom of Heaven that is not obvious to all and is marked by Christ-centred and other-serving values. The way of Jesus is to call us from allegiance to the kingdom of this world to allegiance to the kingdom of heaven. While we continue to live in the world we are learning to live according to the values of the world that is yet to come. Jesus wants us to understand that the Kingdom of heaven that still awaits us in the future is to increasingly inform how we live in the present world, the kingdom that is passing away.

Here is what is so amazing about how Jesus calls. He takes people who are fully entrenched in the affairs of this world and asks them to stop following the king of this world – who Paul in Ephesians refers to as ‘the ruler of the air’ (that is, the Devil) and start following the king of the world that is to come, the Lord Jesus. Think of five of the twelve apostles mentioned in today's Gospel. Matthew, who had been a tax collector, a man whom the other apostles would have been so suspicious of, because not only was he in the pay of Rome, but was more than likely as crooked as a switchback to a mountain summit. Then there was Simon the Zealot, a man who would have hated those like Matthew. He had devoted his life to overthrowing the likes of Matthew – even to the point of murdering them, and would also have worked as a revolutionary in the overthrow of Rome. Then there were the brothers James and John, nicknamed by Jesus “the Son's of Thunder”. No doubt there were times when tempers were raging and life amongst that church of 13 was very turbulent. Then there is Judas Iscariot. One who even after three years could not accept what Jesus was saying about the two kingdoms and in the end chose to follow the king of this world in a self-centred and self-serving life ending in despair and suicide.

It is these very men whom Jesus called to be apostles. Now what does the word apostle mean? It is one who is sent. One sent out into the kingdoms of this world to announce another king and another kingdom. It was this very thing that an apostle not listed among the Twelve, the one who referred to himself as “untimely born and the least of the Apostles”, St. Paul, did repeatedly. He was sent by Jesus to announce to the Churches he established this other kingdom. Nowhere did he have more difficulty doing this than in Corinth. For here were people who though they were beginning to follow Jesus were living their lives more in keeping with the kingdom of this world than with the values of the kingdom of heaven. This was evidenced by the wealthy taking the less well-heeled fellow Christians to small claims court and suing them. It was characterized by a Church that as we read yesterday condoned a man sleeping with his step-mother. It was characterized by the endorsing of other vices such as fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male

prostitutes, sodomites, <sup>10</sup> thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers and robbers continuing in these practices while claiming to be Christians.

But as Paul says, continuing to live as if the kingdom of heaven does not inform the shaping of character and virtue is to deny the existence of that other kingdom and its king. Such people will not inherit heaven because they are living in the present as if heaven does not matter.

And that dear beloved fellow disciples of Jesus is the challenge. In a world where increasingly the kingdom of this world is promoted to the exclusion of that other and greater kingdom, we are called each and every day to put king Jesus and his values first.

Our Collect offers us a prayer that can help us keep Jesus first as we pray:

***“Almighty and merciful God, graciously keep from us all adversity, so that, unhindered, in mind and body alike, we may pursue in freedom of heart the things that are yours.”***

I invite us all to pray this Collect Daily as we join it to our desire to pray and live” Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”.