

Homily for June 23, 2020

“Living like a King”

In today’s Gospel Jesus calls us to enter by the narrow gate and associates this with a simple parable of warning: Do not give what is holy to the dogs or to cast our pearls before swine.

What does this mean?

Dogs were generally undomesticated in Jewish culture, and most were stray scavengers. Swine were especially contemptible to Jews; they were unclean and could not be eaten (Lev 11:7–8; cf. Is 66:3). Jesus redirects these insulting labels to anyone inhospitable to the gospel, Jew or Gentile. Paul in Philippians 3:2 picks up on this theme when he writes:

And in the *Look out for the dogs, look out for the evil workers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.*¹

last chapter of the Book of Revelation reference is again made to those who live profane lives:

*¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood.*²

When Jesus says we are not to throw what is holy before the dogs and swine, he is stating that we are not to be intimidated by those who hold Jesus and his Gospel in contempt.

We have a vivid example of the application of this teaching in the reading from 2nd Kings. Who was Hezekiah? He became the King of the southern kingdom of Judah at the age of 25 and ruled for 29 years, from around 715 to 687 B.C.³ His reign was marked by the great religious reform that placed Jerusalem at the heart of religious life, and by his foreign policy centered on gaining independence from Assyria. The judgment of 2 Kgs 18:5–6 (cf. 2 Chr 29:30) on him was clear: “He trusted in the LORD the God of Israel; so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses.”⁴

¹ [The Holy Bible](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Php 3:2). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

² [The Holy Bible](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Re 22:15). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

³ Hahn, S. (Ed.). (2009). In [Catholic Bible Dictionary](#) (p. 359). New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday.

⁴ Hahn, S. (Ed.). (2009). In [Catholic Bible Dictionary](#) (p. 360). New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday.

It is this confidence in the Lord that we see articulated in his response to King Sennacherib's threats. Rather than panic at the barking, snorting canine/swine, Hezekiah turns to the Lord in trusting confident prayer.

We are called to be inspired by his godly example because as Jesus goes on to state very clearly there are many who will go through the wide gate whereby the Gospel is ignored and disdained. In our response to such profanity we are invited to enter through the narrow gate of prayerful living where we are not governed by the threatening voices of the dogs and swine, but are listening to the directive voice of our loving savior inviting us to live by the Golden Rule of which the Catechism states:

The Law of the Gospel requires us to make the decisive choice between “the two ways” and to put into practice the words of the Lord. It is summed up in the Golden Rule, “Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; this is the law and the prophets.”⁵

By living this way we will guard the pearl of the Gospel so that we can sing with the psalmist:

We ponder you steadfast love O God, in the midst of your Temple. Your name, O God like your praise, reaches to the ends of the earth.

⁵ Catholic Church. (2000). [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#) (2nd Ed., p. 478). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.