

Homily For Tuesday of Holy Week - Year I

St Peter's 8:30am Mass- Tuesday, April 16, 2019

Isaiah 49: 1-6 "I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach the end of the earth."

Psalms 71 "You, O Lord, are my hope ... My mouth will tell of your deeds of salvation."

John 13: 21-33,36-38 "I will lay down my life for you ... You will betray me three times. "

Betray Him ... Or Tell Of His Deeds of Salvation

Introduction

Sports fans are crazy. I know because I am one, at least some of the time. Victory and defeat take us on an emotional roller coaster ride. Tiger Woods wins a golf tournament and millions of people are ecstatic. The Calgary Flames now look poised to end a promising hockey season badly, which would cause thousands of fans to be heartbroken.

There is something in us which seeks victory and hates defeat. And, so we align ourselves with causes, sports teams, movies and stories depicting successes and conquests. Many of these are wholesome and help us identify with what is good and not what is bad.

And so we come to this holy week with that hunger within us. This is the one week of the year that most powerfully tells us why we have been given the desire for triumph and not disaster. And when we reflect on scripture passages like we have been given today, it becomes more and more clear every day what the stakes are. And, I think you know, brothers and sisters, the stakes are very high. But this is the week we have been made for. This is not a game. It is life and death, triumph and defeat. It is the time of decision that we have been made for and has been made for us.

Isaiah

The prophet Isaiah felt it intensely. "The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me." Do you know what it means to be

named? To be named is to be known, to have an identity and a meaning. Isaiah is reminding us that we are known, we have meaning and purpose, we are called.

But in the struggle and the challenge he expresses the great self doubt of the one who is searching for meaning in worldly things. He says, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity."

I wonder if this is how Judas felt? Did he betray Jesus because it felt like his own life's purpose was not being fulfilled? Surely three years with Jesus should have given him a sense of God's hand acting to bring all things to the right conclusion. And, yet, he somehow got lost along the way, and confused about from where the victory would come.

But Isaiah expresses from where the victory for the individual will come. "I am honoured in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength." The psalmist says the same thing: "You are my rock and my fortress. For you, O Lord, are my hope." So why did Judas leave room in his heart for Satan to enter in? Why did he let the darkness become his rock and his strength, which is no strength at all?

Gospel of John

Jesus knew that the forces of evil were close at hand, attempting with all they are worth to steal away God's plan for triumph. Satan knew that this was the moment to make his play, his move. And so, "Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell you one of you will betray me." And we might ask with Peter and the beloved disciple "Who is it who will betray you?" But don't you and I know that all around us there are dark forces seeking to destroy him and to entice us to betray him?

The moment of that betrayal happened, not in some corner far away, but right at the Lord's table, and with bread from his sacred hand, from the bread of life himself- bread that fed the multitudes, the same bread that became his own body, broken; and that same bread that became the great sign of God's presence for all time in the Church in the Eucharist.

And so, I feel a great terror knowing that it is possible to share a meal with Jesus, even while feeding on the lies of the devil. But, at the same time, if I use this holy week to join myself to Jesus, I will have the even greater peace of knowing that the ultimate triumph is assured because, even at the moment of betrayal, Jesus is in control of his destiny. In and through the Son of Man, God will be glorified. The victory will be won. "In the fullness of time, the saviour was born of a woman." In the fullness of time, Christ will turn defeat into victory.

HE will do it, not us. When Peter declared with all the bravado he could muster. "I will lay down my life for you." We can almost hear Jesus answer: No ... no you won't. You will be crushed by human fear. You may not betray me like Judas, but you will deny me.

Call To Action

And so we hear that we can't win this victory, but we can still be victorious, IF you are willing to believe in the victory even as you reflect on the images of defeat, on the one who has been, and will be, betrayed, tortured, forsaken and pierced. Because, we are called, like Isaiah, to a greater purpose and the ultimate triumph. "The Lord says, it won't be enough for you just to be my servant, or to win some passing victory that you can cheer about. "I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation, my victory, may reach to the end of the earth."

This Good Friday, the Calgary Flames will play in front of excited and fearful spectators. But that's a day of fast and abstinence. I can't think of a better thing to fast and abstain from but the emptiness of human victories, and replace them with the psalmist's own cry of joy, as we look towards the day of triumph, "My mouth will tell of your deeds of salvation."