



Nineteenth Week Ordinary Time

Wisdom 18:6-9 Hebrews 11:1-2.8-11 Luke 12:32-48

Today's Gospel begins with an intimate address.

"Do not be afraid, my little flock."

Here, we hear the voice of a loving compassionate elder brother. One whose heart is wrenched by the thought of the trials his friends will face.

Jesus reminds them that God has given them the gift of the kingdom. This gift is a two-edged sword. To be part of bringing about the awareness of God's loving presence in their midst carries great joy but also provides challenge.

Jesus asks his friends to get rid of the pre-occupations that distract us from the mission of God. This is a very difficult task when so much of our lives is ruled by money; rent, taxes, education, travel- not to mention food and clothing. Even the security of having nothing that would make you a target for burglars, is not very attractive. We all know what Jesus is saying, "Where is your heart?" "What is your passion?" Is it in acquiring more and more things? God knows what we need but we are experts at fooling ourselves about what brings satisfaction.

This reflection on fear and anxiety is followed by another picture of the faithfulness expected of the disciple. "Keep your belt tight". Jesus always used images that were clear. This is a way of saying "be ready" as the belt held the long over-garment out of the way and prevented tripping. The disciple must always be ready for action.

Then follows a parable of service- It's a sign of immaturity if workers slacken off if there's no supervision. In this story Jesus compares God to a master who is also a servant. This is a recurring image in the Gospels. The authority of the disciples must be patterned on God. God is a servant leader. The better you are at serving God's people, the better the leader you will be. This is in stark contrast to the type of leadership many institutions follow, including areas of the Church. In John's Gospel the foot washing stands as a sacred part of Jesus' last will and testament.

The Christian church is to model servant leadership to the world and we who are disciples need to be on our guard against the tendency to forget this.

The passages from Wisdom and the letter to the Hebrews speak of faith.

The Christian way is the way of faith. Faith is intimately linked to trust and hope. Faith is not a catechism of truths. There are truths that we hold dear but knowing them does not constitute a life of faith. Knowledge informs the heart but it doesn't necessarily of itself, bring about a transformation. Faith enables

us to go forward in hope especially when faced with the persuasiveness of others. We know we must be a community of love which seeks to bring that love to others so when we see people in positions of responsibility wanting to exclude some from the community of Jesus we have to ask the hard questions. If we follow a Jesus who welcomed sinners and the outcast how can we set our faces against the very people whom Jesus included in the circle of his love?

Julian of Norwich spoke of God's courtesy. This describes God's attitude towards us. This is the God who lights the lamp and serves at table. This is the God we profess to follow.

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