

Nineteenth Sunday in Ord. Time C/2013

The readings of this Sunday talk about the importance of faith and trust in God. They invite us to renew our faith in God and to remain faithful to him by fulfilling the mission he has entrusted to us.

The first reading of the book of Wisdom recalls the night of Passover when the Israelites left Egypt for the Holy Land. It attests that in advance and through faith, the forefathers of Israel knew that God would set them free. That is why they waited with courage to see their salvation for the glory of God and the destruction of their foes.

What is behind this text is the idea that whatever suffering God's people may have gone through, there is always certainty that God will eventually intervene in their favor. There is also the idea that God not only cares for his people, but he equally glorifies his name when he saves them from their distress.

However, in order to come to such a vision, it requires a strong faith in God, because the time of suffering is very often a moment of trial for those who suffer unjustly. That is why the second reading insists on the faith of the patriarchs by showing how, in the various and difficult circumstances of their life, they have kept their trust in God beyond human imagining. For that reason, they are not only appreciated by God, but also by their descendants who admire their faithfulness.

This text helps us understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus praises the faithful servant who stays awake and on duty when his master delays his return. First of all, the Gospel starts with the assurance of Jesus to his disciples that they should not be afraid, because God has given them the kingdom. He invites them also to sell their belongings and build treasure in heaven that can never be destroyed.

After that, Jesus invites his disciples to be ready and prepared like servants who await their master's return from a wedding at an unknown hour. If the master finds the servants vigilant on his arrival, it is their chance, because not only will he eat with them, but he will also serve them.

Then, Jesus gives an example of the master of a house who would never let a thief break into his house if he knew at what time of the night he would come. In the same way, he invites the disciples to be prepared, because they do not know when the son of Man will come.

At Peter's question to know if this parable was only for them or for everyone else, Jesus responded with the image of a prudent steward who was put in charge by his master over his household in order to provide food allowance for his servants at the proper time.

For Jesus, such a servant that his master will find fulfilling his duty when he comes will be blessed. As a consequence, he will put him in charge of all his property. However, if because of the delay of his master, the servant were negligent and, instead of acting correctly, were cruel, glutton and drunkard, the master would surprise him at his return and punish him for his unfaithfulness.

The Gospel finishes with a strong statement from Jesus, namely that a servant who knew his master's will and did not make the preparations or acted negligently will be

punished severely. However, the servant who was ignorant of his master's will, but acted negligently will be punished lightly and accordingly. Therefore, much will be required of one to whom much is given and still more will be asked of one entrusted with more.

What do we learn from these readings? The first point I want to highlight is about the challenge of faith. According to the example of Abraham and Sarah, faith is a total trust and a complete confidence in God. It is a hope that waits with certainty the fulfillment of God's promise. That is why the Letter to the Hebrews says that faith is absolutely certain that what it believes is true and what it expects will come.

To have faith is to walk with God and follow him without hesitation, even if we do not know where all that can lead us, just like Abraham and Sarah. Moreover, to have faith is to wait with patience for the fulfillment of God's promise.

That is challenging, because we do not want to wait. We all want our problem to be resolved right away and have little patience when it does not happen. And yet, Abraham and Sarah waited until the day it pleased to God to visit them and give them a child.

To have faith is to live in this world with eyes beyond this world. That is why we have to understand that we are on earth like pilgrims. Our true home is heaven where God awaits us at the end of the journey.

The second point I want to underline is the importance of preparedness. Human experience has taught us that life for many of us is filled with loose ends. There are things undone and things half-done; there are things put off and things thought about, but never attempted. Each one of us can continue the litany and the list will be long.

Why shall we be prepared? We have to do so, because nobody knows when Jesus will come back. As it is with an unexpected break-in of a house, so will it be with the return of Jesus. If only one knew that there would be a break-in of his home; what would he not do to protect it?

This statement is very important, because there is a tendency to delay for tomorrow what we can do today. Though we have many reasons why we want to delay things, like our young age or our still good health, we have always to remember that the end will be a surprise. If we do not want to be surprised, we better be prepared and ready.

Let us remember that one is blessed who knows what to do and strives at one's best to do it. That is why knowledge brings responsibility and accountability. In that sense, sin is doubly sinful to those who knew better what to do and did not. In the same way, failure is doubly blameworthy in those who had every chance to do well and did not, because they were negligent. Let us pray that the Lord may help us to work hard for our salvation, so that he might find us in peace with him, with our neighbor and with ourselves. God bless you all!

Wisdom 18: 6-9; Hebrews 11: 1-2, 8-19; Luke 12: 32-48



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