

Sunday, February 5, 2012

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Job 7:1-4, 6-7; Psalm 147; I Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23; Mark 1: 29-39

In Job we find one who has, involuntarily, been stripped of everything we consider important: family, wealth, success and even physical health. All he can count on is God to notice his tossings through nights of misery. In Paul we hear of his voluntary weakness, his willingness to be all things to all people. All he can count on is God and the good news of God's love. In Jesus we see a man who reaches out to Peter's mother in law, which opens the floodgates of all the sick in the town. His night is spent healing, and voluntarily exhausting himself. He steals away in the quiet of morning and refuses to be lured back by their applause. He wants to keep moving with the good news to other towns.

What keeps you going when you are stripped of all you consider important, even necessary? When do you exhaust yourself? For what? For whom? If you take an early morning period for quiet time like Jesus, with Jesus, where might you move? To whom?

Jesus, thank you for calling us like Paul to be weak with the weak, to share the sorrow of the brokenhearted and to encourage all whom we meet to count on you and our God.

Monday, February 6, 2012

1 Kings 8: 1-7, 9-13; Psalm 132; Mark 6: 53-56

We hear today of how King Solomon built a temple to house the ark of the covenant. This temple was destroyed and re-built, destroyed again and now is remodeled as the Dome of the Rock, a mosque most sacred to the Muslims. Only the western wall of the Temple stands, which the Jews call the Wailing Wall. There they come as individuals to pray and in great crowds to welcome the Sabbath on Friday evenings. American Jewish boys come to be consecrated Bar Mitzvah, son of the commandment, and are carried on the shoulders of their elders. In the gospel, people "rushed" to Jesus to pray, to wail, to bring the sick and possessed to him, perhaps bearing them on their shoulders.

When have you rushed to Jesus? Whom do you bear on your shoulders? What do you need from him, personally? "People at once recognized him." Where did you recognize him yesterday? Where will you find him today? Ask him.

Jesus, in our rushing, keep us in enough peace always to come to you, to recognize you. We beg you for peace in Israel and Palestine, between Muslims and Jews. Please free the Middle East from violence. Give your people *shalom* and *salaam*.

Tuesday, February 7, 2012

1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30; Psalm 84; Mark 7: 1-13

Jesus notices how religious authorities can twist tradition to suit their needs, “teaching human precepts as doctrines,” while their hearts are far from God. Solomon (who later will turn out to be an oppressive tyrant) prays, exulting that there is no God like ours, who “keeps covenant and faithful love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart.” Heart is also the theme of the psalm: “My heart and my flesh cry out for joy,” and the Alleluia verse prays: “Turn my heart to do your will, O God.” Today we might begin a long range preparation for Lent, beginning February 22 this year.

Show Jesus your heart, its loves, its fears, all its desires. What do you need him to do with your heart during this Lent? What grace will you ask for this Lent? Why is this Lent different from all other Lents (to paraphrase the Passover question)? What do you want to be different? Tell him.

We offer you our hearts, Lord Jesus. Bring them, faithful and compassionate high priest, to God so that God’s will for *shalom* may be done through our whole-hearted response to you.

Wednesday, February 8, 2012

1 Kings 10:1-10; Psalm 37; Mark 7: 14-23

The Queen of Sheba comes to test King Solomon with hard questions, and is amazed by his wisdom, and his sumptuous living. Power and wealth are beginning to corrupt Solomon, but it takes more than one sin to turn him into an oppressor of his own people. Jesus warns his disciples and us to be careful not of certain foods going into the mouth, but of what comes out of a person with evil intentions: “fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly.” This seems a more complete (and more scriptural, of course) list than the seven capital sins.

You pray regularly. You watch and listen to Jesus. What have you to do with fornication, theft, murder? No one outside of yourself can tell you what is sin for you. As you grow closer to Jesus, your sin will become less gross, more subtle, but still dangerous. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you your sin. Do NOT examine your conscience. Let the Spirit reveal, and that revelation may come at odd moments. Be on the alert.

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us sinners. Keep on saving us from subtle sin, from denial of sin and its self-absorbing power in our life. Give us back the joy of your salvation!

Thursday, February 9, 2012

1 Kings 11: 4-13; Psalm 106; Mark 7: 24-30

God is angry with Solomon and his idolatry. Jesus is angry with the Syro-Phoenecian woman and her pestering. He has gone to the region of Tyre and Sidon, both seacoast towns. Perhaps he needed a long weekend at the beach, and now the Gentiles want his healing power. Basically he calls her a dog, and with her heart fastened on her daughter’s need, she accepts the insult. Then Jesus models for us a conversion of heart. Hearing his own words coming back at

him, he says: “Woman, for saying that...” He heals the girl because this woman has raised his consciousness about his bigotry. His parents surely never taught him to call Gentiles dogs, but his culture, unexamined, was as bigoted as Judeans were about Galileans (i.e., “Can any good come from Galilee?”). All of us are steeped in the sin of our culture, social sin. Most of us are fairly unconscious about ways we participate in social sin. We need to be rudely awakened.

Again, ask the Spirit to show you how you share the sin of our culture. When Paul writes that “in Christ there is no Jew/Gentile, free/slave, male/female, but all are one in Christ” (Galatians 3: 28) he sees Christ undermining the chief social sins: religious hatred, racism, classism, militarism, nationalism, sexism. Ask for healing of our society and its “isms.” Beg for us all to be one in Christ.

Thank you, God, for setting us in this culture, this society. Let Solomon serve as a warning to us, lest our luxuries and pretense of power lure us into even greater disunity and violence as wealthy nations. Lord Jesus Christ, be merciful to us sinners.

Friday, February 10, 2012

1 Kings 11:29- 32, 12:19; Psalm 81; Mark 7: 31-37

In a symbolic, prophetic gesture, Solomon’s son receives 10 pieces of cloth, signifying his rule over the 10 northern tribes of Israel. As punishment for Solomon’s many sins, including “the forced labor of the house of Joseph” (they are now Solomon’s slaves), the nation will be divided in two: Israel to the north and Judea to the south. God cries in the psalm: “O, if only my people would listen to me!” God longs for our obedience, but does not demand it. God wants a free response, in love.

What does God cry to you? “O, if only _____ would _____!” Be still. Listen. What bubbles up from the depths of you? Write it down. There may be more than one thing God wants. Talk over this longing of God with Jesus. Ask to share God’s longing for you.

Here again, our God, are our hearts. You have given all to us, and we return all that we can to you. Help us to listen moment by moment for all that you want for us, for our church and our society.

Saturday, February 11, 2012

1 Kings 12: 26-32, 13:33-34; Psalm 106; Mark 8:1- 10

Jeroboam is afraid that if his Israelite people keep going to the Temple in Jerusalem they will fall under the sway of his brother, king of Judah, and thus reunite the country. So Jeroboam sets up two gold calves for the people to worship and establishes his own priesthood and liturgical feasts. What can the people do? The psalmist begs: “Lord, remember us for the love you bear your people.” To re-member is to make one again. When we remember we make present the saving acts of God; now we need God to re-member us. Jesus shows how God remembers us and notices our hungers. He feeds the crowds who have been listening to him.

“They have been with me now for three days.”

We worship Jesus as God-with-us. Today he says about us: “_____ has been with me now for three days” or five years or 50 years. Imagine him being comforted by your being with him! Watch him feed your hungers with more than bread. Tell him ALL that you want, need, hunger for.

O God, remember us for the love you bear your people. Help us to remember you often today. Thank you for your Spirit who prays within us continually.