

Commentary to the Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

Treasure Today



The first reading for today as well as today's Gospel contain some of the most comforting words in Sacred Scripture. The first reading is taken from the second part of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, often referred to as Second Isaiah. This section of Isaiah was written while the people of Judah were exiled in Babylon in the sixth century before Christ. They were forced into a slavery. They had no visible means of escaping. They knew that they were being punished for their sins. But they feared that God had forgotten them. The prophet tells them, "Zion said 'The Lord has forsaken me; the Lord has forgotten me. But can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even if she should forget, I will never forget you,' says the Lord."

There are times that each of us fear that we have been forgotten. A crisis hits our family or that of a friend, or we try our best at some task and fail, or we learn that a sickness is far more serious than we expected. Perhaps a marriage is in stress or a close friendship falls apart, and we ask, "Where is God? Has he forsaken me?" The prophet tells us, "God is here. He loves each of us more than we can imagine, even more than the love of a mother for a newborn." Do you remember the first time that you held your baby? You didn't know you had that much love in you. God loves each of us infinitely more than all that.

God loves each of us, here and now. He is not putting off his love until tomorrow. He loves us now. We need to pause for a second and just think about this: right now God is loving me and you with a love deeper than any of us can fathom. In the most beautiful section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus points out the birds of the sky who are fed by God and the wild flowers clothed by God, and tells us that if our Heavenly Father cares for them, how much more does He care for us.

The problem we face is dealing with anxiety. One aside here. I am not using the word anxiety in the clinical, psychological sense. Many people suffer from anxiety attacks. That is not what I am referring to when I use the term anxiety. I'm using the term anxiety in its basic meaning: anxiety is the fear of the unknown. What will tomorrow bring? Will I survive the next crisis? Will I get all the work done that I need to complete to provide for my future and that of my family? What if this happens? What if that happens? Jesus is telling us to calm down, and trust in Him. Yes we have to be prudent and prepare for the future. But fearing the unknown gets us nowhere. It is also a rejection of our trust in God to care for us. Don't be anxious, the Lord says. Tomorrow will bring new joys and new graces. Yes it will have its burdens, but it will also have the grace to conquer them. When grace is considered the burdens of tomorrow will be no heavier than those of today. Each day has its own toil, its own cross and its own joy. And each day of our lives is watched over by our God who loves us so much. We can only live in the present. We have to put our trust in God. What matters is the here and now.

Tomorrow is not yet. What matters is today. Our focus must be on today. Today is the day we need to love and to grow in holiness through all those little occurrences of our lives that make up our lives. There are things we do today which are naturally pleasant. Other things are far less gratifying. But every single event of our day can be a gem made to shine for God for eternity, a gem polished with supernatural meaning. Everything we do we do for the Lord. God isn't just observing us. He is loving us. St. Theresa of the Child Jesus taught that there is no action too small, too insignificant to serve the Lord. Even picking up a piece of paper is a prayer to God. That is the reason why the morning offering is so important for each of us. We get up and we say, "Lord, I give this day to you. Whatever happens, Lord, may my actions be a prayer to you."

When the Lord tells us not to fear for tomorrow, He is not telling us to be imprudent and not prepare for the future; nor is He telling us that it is OK to procrastinate. What the Lord is telling us is to live each day as if it were the only day in our lives. Each day is the one that we must fill with love for God. We cannot let a day slip through our hands. Today will not come around again, ever. God expects us to fill today with acts of love for Him and for His Presence in others.

My soul rests in God alone, from whom comes my salvation. My soul be at rest in God alone, from whom comes my hope. God alone is my rock and my salvation, my secure height; I shall not fall. Trust in God at all times, my people! Pour out your hearts to God our refuge. That is from Psalm 62.

Spiritual writers call trusting in the Lord holy abandonment. This is the life of the Christian. This is the life of the man and woman, boy and girl who loves and who knows that he or she is loved. We put ourselves into God's hands. We do our best to serve Him. And we trust in Him to care for us today, tomorrow and for all eternity.

Jesus tells us today, “Your heavenly Father knows all that you need. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and everything will be given to you besides.”

It takes tremendous courage to be a true follower the Lord, to abandon ourselves to His Life. But just as a toddler runs into the outstretched arms of his mother, we leap into the arms of the God who loves each of us as though we were His only child.

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