

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Sep 18th 2013

Just before we read the words of today's gospel, Jesus has offered praise to John the Baptist and clearly identified him as the one who was to announce the coming of the Messiah. Luke then points out that many, including the least likely, have received John's baptism and "the righteousness of God." The Pharisees and scholars of the law, by contrast, have rejected John and thus rejected "the plan of God for themselves." Now, through this little parable, Jesus points out that, having decided against God's plan, they rationalize their rejection of John naming his as too ascetic and their rejection of Jesus as too libertarian. Once having rejected God's plan, any excuse will do!

These lines remind us of the all-too-human tendency to find reasons to escape from the nearness of God for ourselves, "the plan of God" for us. From the Garden of Eden to the present, the primal temptation is to believe that God does not have our best interests at heart and that to surrender to him and his plan for us is to become enslaved. Fearing that "enslavement" above all, any excuse will do to keep us from that surrender:

"I don't have time to be more involved/to pray." "Plan of God for me? Perhaps for some saints, but God isn't that interested in my smallness." "How can God have a plan for me, when the world around me is such a mess?"

Do we carry fears of the "plan of God" for us? Jeremiah (29, 11-14) encourages and consoles us: "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! Plans to give you a future full of hope. When you call me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you, says the Lord, and I will change your lot."

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