

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Feb 11th 2016

Today, with the fresh memory of Ash Wednesday in our hearts and minds the scripture readings speak plainly and bluntly of life and death. While the message is consistent through the readings from Deuteronomy, the psalm and the Gospel of Luke the tone for each is distinctive.

The Gospel reading begins with Jesus predicting his rejection by leaders of his own people and his brutal execution. But even in that sharp and stark statement of his death he shows some light in the revelation of his resurrection on the third day. Jesus continues however in challenging his followers that to maintain fidelity as a follower we must be prepared to face our own path of the cross. In this path will be denial of self and a commitment to losing our life for Jesus's sake.

This call goes against most of our normal human instincts. Humility and renouncement of self goes against our tendency to advance ourselves in the eyes of others. This inherent conflict is somewhat put in context by the words of Moses. His council is to obey the commandments of God, love God and walk in His ways with the result being life and prosperity. Moses clearly says to choose life we much choose God—and Jesus expounds on this by saying we must reject our life in the world and choose Jesus.

As we walk the path of Lent and listen to the movement of the Holy Spirit inside of us in these times let us reflect on what choices we must make to achieve life and prosperity and not death and doom. These may be choices of denial and sacrifice or they may be manifested as intentional acts of service and commitment to others. Whatever our Lenten journey, let us be comforted by the psalmist: “the Lord watches over the way of the just, but the way of the wicked vanishes.”

Blessings to all this Lent, may God's grace and the Holy Spirit bring to us and those we love true life in communion with Jesus.

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