

## Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Oct 14th 2016

“In Christ we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ.

Typically, I would have skipped right over this sentence in the first reading. I tend to ignore implications that our lives are “preordained;” that we don’t have the ability to consider, to deliberate and to choose. It disturbs my sensibilities when I hear someone say “I know God has a plan for me.” Today, the certainty and the profundity of this statement drew me and comforted me.

Romans 8:28 has long been a favored passage; we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Even my shortcomings, poor choices and misguided actions, somehow, are transformed to accomplish good in this world. For those who have put on the mind of Christ and whose hearts have been transformed in him, even the evil in this world does not cause them to despair, as they are confident of the Divine’s presence in its midst and have assurance of God’s labor on our behalf.

But today’s reading leads me to desire even more than this – to recognize and discern the Divine guidance that is always available if we seek it. The One who has chosen us lives in us, guides us and accomplishes the Divine intention. We still have the power to choose... but who would want to choose other than the Divine intention? Who doesn’t want more life, hope, justice, peace, love for our world? Do we have the ability to ultimately and forever choose against God as today’s Gospel might suggest?

The Gospel reading also provides hope about how to deal with the fears that sneak in and threaten to divert our attention from God’s purposes. Fears that we are unloved and unlovable; inadequate and insufficient. It is only when these fears are brought into the light that we can see them for the nothingness that they are. We can trust that everything, even each of us, is held by loving hands.

Autumn changes are wonderful images for reflecting this truth. As the leaves fall, we see the stark, naked beauty of tree limbs and trunks; as flowers die, skeleton shrubs remain; both reminders that what sustained and nourished life these past months of summer was hidden until now. We know that amidst the evil in our world, our own poor choices and shortcomings, God sustains us, nourishes us and guides us to fulfill the Divine intentions.

