

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Aug 19th 2017

“Jesus Christ is my kingdom. If he is all I have, I shall have everything.

If I don't have him I lose everything.” -- St. Louis of Anjou

In no uncertain terms, Joshua laid out a clear choice in today's reading: What God are you going to serve; the Lord who has done so much for you or a strange god? Joshua didn't sugar coat this choice. He told the tribes of Israel to choose, warning them that their God was a jealous God.

Still, the Israelites responded: We will serve God, remembering all God had done for them. Is that something we think about in our lives today? About how much God has done for us? While it makes my daughters a bit crazy, I occasionally respond to their latest troubles by asking, “That is tough, but what if you had woken up in Syria this morning?” Part of that is genetic as my mother often told us: “If you can get up out of your bed in the morning and dress, feed and go to the bathroom by yourself, you are way ahead of the game.” That admonition probably had a lot to do with being tired of having seven children whine about this and that. But my mother was also trying to call our attention to what we did have and to be grateful for what we have. Not an easy task in America where we are constantly bombarded with images to have and be more so we can ‘belong and measure up.’ While this may always may have been the case, it seems easier easy to serve strange gods in our world today.

Would it make it easier for me to choose God as the most important part of my life if I started each day remembering all God has done for me? I know well the strange god I have faithfully served for over three decades: work. Spending time at work has usually seemed much more productive and rewarding than sitting quietly with God.

Fortunately, today's Gospel points me in the right direction about this constant choice in my life.

While I completely understand how the disciples were trying to protect Jesus by shooing those mothers away, what mother would not want Jesus to hold and bless her child(ren)?! But Jesus rebukes the disciples saying: “Let the children come unto me...for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” Is it because children most often are without guile? That children have not yet been caught up in the busyness of daily life so they have not created strange gods to serve?

We have so much to learn from children by the way they are able to just be in the moment. My daughters taught me to marvel at the different songs of the birds or to shriek with delight at the silly squirrels who jumped back and forth between a slender branch and the roof of our garage. They challenged me to slow down and to see the amazing things going on right in front of my eyes. So many things I had never noticed or taken the time to appreciate before.

This is what I need to do if I am going to stop worshipping at the altar of work. Work needs to be reduced to just work so I can consciously choose God each day. Jesus is calling me to realize that God is the most important part of my life.

Just be and really see what your God has done for you. Then it will be easier to follow me. Our lives are important and how we choose to spend our time is important, but whom we choose to serve is the most important.

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