

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Sep 4th 2018

Paul's letter considers how we know things that are spiritual. The structure of the Psalm grows out of roots in the Hebrew language. The Gospel makes the point of Jesus' authority. My personal reflection on these passages leads me to consider them in reverse order.

The acclamation before the Gospel is borrowed from another instance where the crowd was filled with fear and amazement by Jesus' intervention. The Gospel itself considers Jesus' authority both in terms of His teaching and His power over unclean spirits. I was reminded of reading *The Exorcist* many years ago. A young Catholic imagination could create much more fearful demonic images than any movie could attempt to portray. Over time it struck me that it was much easier for me to picture the forces of evil than to create mental pictures of God. The meditation from the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, which has always stood out for me, is that of the two standards. In this meditation, Satan in all his power is juxtaposed to Christ who works under very different banner.

Psalm 145 (in Hebrew) is a set of thoughts where each verse begins the subsequent letter of the alphabet. Knowing this gives a certain "what comes next" interest that flows out of its literary form. Today's text only includes the middle piece. The theme is praise to the Lord including a recognition of God's endowments to us and the enduring nature of God's Kingdom.

The first reading brings me back to my reflection on the Gospel. I see Paul setting up something like the *Meditation on the Two Standards*. There is the secular world with its trappings of wealth, power and pride. There is the spiritual world where, rather than struggling on our own to achieve things that are transient, we are open to receive gifts that are lasting. Today I am drawn to pray along these lines.

Dear gracious and merciful God,

I pray for the strength not to be drawn into complicity with the selfish life.

I pray for the gift of the Spirit "so that [I] may understand the things freely given [me] by God".

And I ask for the consolation that is found in right action flowing out of gratitude.

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