

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

Reading I: Wisdom 18:6-9

Responsorial Psalm 33:1, 12, 18-19, 20-22

Reading II: Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19 or 1-2, 8-12

Gospel: Luke 12:32-48 or 35-40

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/080722.cfm>



Cloud of witnesses

The preaching of Jesus continues in the Gospel selection this week. Jesus emphasizes that if a person sincerely seeks the kingdom, they will find it for God is happy to welcome them into it. It is not about earning it for no one can earn the kingdom. It is God's gift. This gift of God calls for a response to God by the way a person lives and how one treats others. The parables presented seek to highlight one's response.

The first parable calls disciples to be on the lookout for the master's return. It is easy to be focused on the challenges of each day and decisions that need to be made in life. Choices need to be made about food, housing, clothing, transportation, and work. These are important but must be made in light of the Master's call. How will one option versus another bring a person closer to God?

The context is not only one's readiness for the end of the world but the particular end of one's life. While Christ's return may happen at any time, it is more likely that one's death may occur at a time one least suspects. Thus, one always should be ready to greet the Lord. For those who are ready, God will bring them to the fullness of life. God's power brings forth life as shown in the master waiting on the servants who have sat down at the table.

The second parable is given in response to Peter's question concerning to whom the first parable was addressed. Those whom the master has placed in a position of authority have a great responsibility. If the servant fulfills the expected duties, the master will then put this servant in charge of greater responsibilities.

Those entrusted with responsibilities must act according to the will of the one who gave the responsibility. Misuse of one's authority will result in serious consequences. Whether one exercises power in the church, business, government, or family, one should use one's power and authority for its purpose and never for one's personal agenda. Misuse of power in the Christian community has been a cause of great scandal. It wounds not only the person who was impacted but the whole Christian community for it shakes the faith and trust of those who are weak and obscures the work of evangelization to those looking for the light.

The Book of Wisdom was written in the first century before Christ to assist the Jewish community living in Egypt. As a minority in a foreign land, their challenges were different from the community in Judea. In the current passage, the author highlights how their ancestors trusted in the promises made by God. Even while they were living in slavery in Egypt (1200 years prior), they trusted in God's covenant love and practiced the ritual actions that manifested their faith and response to God's oaths.

The author is implicitly challenging the people living in Egypt in his time to be faithful and confident in God's promises. They are not to just along with practices of the contemporary culture. They have an identity as God's people that must be part of their lives. The same message is applicable in any age and in our time to live the relationship with God that is the heart of our identity.

Chapter 11 of the Letter to the Hebrews is a powerful reflection on faith. Read the whole chapter if you have time. The author moves the Old Testament highlighting how those who trusted God overcame difficulties and suffering. “Who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions,...put foreign armies to flight.” (Heb 11: 33) Faith is not an intellectual commitment. Faith involves living in a trusting reliance upon God, the one who is always faithful.

One is a person of faith when one lives a life of relationship with God and relies upon God to lead one through every situation in life. This faith grows and develops through prayerful conversation with God and by pausing to recognize how God is active in one’s life each day. This list of our faithful ancestors gives witness to lives lived in faith.

Reflection Questions:

How can one live in readiness for the Lord’s return whether at the end of the world or the end of life?

What does Jesus’ teaching about authority and responsibility apply to your life?

What are some of the ways contemporary culture draws people away from living for God?

Who are some of the people who have lived lives of faith and who have experienced God’s fidelity?

What are some of your experiences of God’s care and protection of you?

Themes:

Faith

God’s care and fidelity

The witness given by those who have gone before us

Use of power and authority

Prayer Suggestions:

For a deepening of faith: that our hearts may be open to the witness of our friends and mentors who have gone before us and draw strength and courage from them

For the grace to remember: that we may be conscious of all the good things that God has done for us and allow them to inspire us to greater generosity

For all who exercise leadership in the Christian community: that they may be watchful and attentive to the signs of God’s movement within the Body of Christ

For all who have lost faith: that the Spirit of God will renew their hearts and open a new springtime of faith so that they come to a new relationship with the living God