

31st Sunday in Ordinary Time, 30 October 2022

Scriptures: Wisdom 11:22--12:2; 2Thess.1:11--2:2; Luke19:1-10

Homily: Fr. Ken

In the first reading from the Book of Wisdom, the Lord delights in all of creation. Because of the Lord's joyous love, compassion toward us is infinite.

In the second reading, we see the Christians in Thessalonica living in the hope and expectation of the Lord's coming. St. Paul urges them to be at peace, and allow the Lord to bring to completion the goodness within them.

In the Gospel, we find the familiar story of the vertically challenged Zacchaeus.

Like Zacchaeus, many of us let our own lives become consumed by furthering ourselves in the world—making more and more money, climbing farther and farther up the proverbial corporate ladder.

For others, the business of life is produced by the constant round of household chores or just keeping going in difficult circumstances. All of us, like the Thessalonians, have a tendency to fill the spaces of our lives with some kind of anxiety or excitement about the future. And all the time, the present moment is before us, and we become lost in the crowd.

Zacchaeus' great gift is not that he has led a disciplined life of prayer and goodness; he has become thoroughly sucked into a life of wealth and position, even at the cost of marginalizing himself from his own people. His great gift is simply the desire he has to see Jesus. Not only does he want to see Jesus, but he is prepared to do whatever it takes to see him—to find a space above the crowd, whatever the indignity of his action.

Jesus is the Son of God who is “lover of life”, as the first scripture reading tells us—the God who “overlooks people’s sins so that they can repent”. This is the God who always has room for us, and finds a space in which to meet us and change our lives for the better. So, Zacchaeus’ spontaneous, foolish-looking action is repaid richly by the way in which Jesus himself opens his heart to him. Through hospitality with the Lord, Zacchaeus is changed—and his life emptied of some of what was holding him back from God’s love for him.

We live in a world that is not only unprecedentedly busy and filled with activity and distractions, but one that also prides itself in such activities.

Multi-tasking, working long hours, filling our crowded social calendar with more and more commitments—all of these things have not only become normal for many people, but they have become a way of life that is even “aspired to”.

Today’s scripture readings remind us that even when we feel very small, and crowded out, Jesus is present. The challenge is whether we can stop what we’re doing long enough to find a way of putting ourselves in a more spacious place, a place where we can see the Lord and the Lord can look directly at us. We can be certain that, when we do this, a deeper relationship with the Lord will follow. He wants to come into our homes and eat with us.

If we take the risk of looking foolish, like Zacchaeus, we will inevitably have our busy lives called into question, and changes may need to be made. But it is then that the joyful reality of salvation can begin to break into our lives.

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