

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, 29 January 2023

Scriptures: Zephaniah 2:3,3:12-13; 1Cor.1:26-31; Matt.5:1-12

Homily: Fr. Ken

When a person makes the time to carefully read St. Matthew's Gospel, what is discovered is that there is much reference to "the Good News" as such. Jesus proclaims that the kingdom of God is at hand, and that people should repent and believe the Good News. But at that point, people are not really told what this Good News actually is.

Reading along, we come to what we heard last Sunday. Jesus is challenging the fishermen Simon and Andrew, James and John, to stop what they are doing and to follow him. They are not told where they are going. There is a building sense of excitement, but no details about the Good News.

The Gospel narration then gives a summary of Jesus' activity. He preaches in synagogues he heals sick people. This does begin to appear to be Good News at least for those involved; but it seems there must be more to come. This is the point we reach in today's Gospel.

Now we begin to understand the scope of the Good News. It is outlined in full in the Sermon of the Mount, which Jesus now preaches: his first of five public sermons spread throughout the Gospel of Matthew. Today's passage consists of the famous introduction, which we know as the Beatitudes. These sayings constitute one of the most familiar of all Gospel passages. It is used in the Liturgy of the Church more than any other Gospel text, covering a surprising range from ordinary Sundays and weekdays to major seasons, from funerals to weddings, and on a variety of commemorations, sacramental ceremonies, and saints' days. It is the first passage in the Gospel of Matthew to give a clear indication of what Jesus means by the Good News.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus makes plain what the Good News consists of: it is the possession of the kingdom of heaven. This is stressed at both the beginning and the end of the list: the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in spirit, and to those who are persecuted in the cause of righteousness.

Jesus may well have been the first person ever to declare clearly who exactly belongs to the Kingdom of God. He is certainly the first and only person who spelled out the qualifications for becoming part of it.

Not only does the kingdom belong to those who are poor in spirit and those who are persecuted for standing up for what is right: it is found among those who mourn, those who hunger and thirst for what is right, who are merciful, pure in heart, those who seek justice and peace, and so on.

The Good News is that the kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus turned word into action when he cured sick people, cleansed lepers, forgave sinners. That is when he made the words of the Beatitudes a concrete reality for those whose lives were broken. It is Good News that the values of God are here for human persons to share. In Jesus' final sermon in Matthew, in the last judgement parable, he tells his followers that however they behaved towards the least of his brothers and sisters is the way they behaved to Christ himself.

And so we conclude this brief homily reflection with this question: We may hear the Good News, but how well do we live it and share it with others?

-end-