

Scripture Study

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



Opening prayer

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

(Ps 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19)

Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

Matthew 10:37-42

Overview of the Gospel:

- In the episodes in Matthew preceding this Sunday's Gospel reading we hear Jesus commission the twelve apostles (Matthew 10:1-8), and began to hear some of His instructions to them (Mt. 10:26-33). This week we hear the conclusion of His instructions.
- Starting in verse 34-36 (not included in our reading), Jesus warns that he has "not come to bring peace, but a sword." The commitment to be a disciple of Jesus is total and will bring friction and conflict with even the members of one's own family (verse 36: "Of his own household.").
- In this Sunday's reading, Jesus continues that warning, emphasizing that our dedication to him even takes precedence over our loyalty to family. This may be part of the cross we must be willing to bear to be considered worthy to be called his followers.
- Our reading concludes with the comforting assurance from Jesus that a reward awaits those that receive and support those who themselves live lives of generous sacrifice for the Lord.

Questions:

- In the first reading, why and how did the woman of Shunem show hospitality to the prophet Elisha? How was she rewarded? What other biblical figure does this remind you of? (see Luke 1:5-25)
- In the second reading, what are the principal effects of Baptism? What is Paul alluding to when he describes this mystery? How does verse 11 relate to the Gospel reading for this Sunday?
- In the Gospel reading, what is the standard that Jesus sets forth as a requirement for being his disciple? What is the price? What is the reward?
- What image comes to mind of those who receive Jesus' disciples as if they were receiving him? How is this like receiving a king's envoy or the ambassador from a head of state?
- Who are the "little ones" in this verse? Why do you think Jesus refers to them in this way?
- What kinds of divisions has Jesus caused in your life? What would you do if Jesus asked you to turn away from or leave those you love most?
- How has the paradox of this verse worked itself out in your life? If you do not know, what might "losing your life" for Jesus' sake mean for you?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 858, 859, 1506, 1618, 2232

Closing prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"We have to die to ourselves and be born again to a new life. Jesus Christ obeyed in this way, even unto death on a cross (Philippians 2:18); that is why God exalted Him. If we obey God's will, the cross will mean our own resurrection and exaltation. Christ's life will be fulfilled step by step in our own lives. It will be said of us that we have tried to be good children of God, who went about doing good in spite of our weakness and personal shortcomings, no matter how many." --St Josemaria Escriva

"He who loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me"

Gospel Reading: **Matt 10:37-42**

³⁷ *He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;* ³⁸ *and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.* ³⁹ *He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.*

⁴⁰ *"He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me.* ⁴¹ *He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.* ⁴² *And whoever gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."*

Meditation: *"Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."* (Matthew 10:34) What does warfare and weapons, such as the sword, have to do with the reign of God? Jesus came in peace to reconcile a broken and sinful humanity with an all-merciful and loving God. Jesus also came to wage war, to overthrow the powers and principalities arrayed against God and his kingdom. What are these powers? Jesus describes Satan as the ruler of this world whom he will cast out (John 12:31). The battle Jesus had in mind was not an earthly conflict between nations, but a spiritual warfare between the forces of Satan and



the armies of God. The scriptures make clear that there are ultimately only two powers or kingdoms — God's kingdom and the kingdom of darkness. John contrast these two kingdoms in the starkest of terms: We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

What does Satan seek? Satan opposes God and all who would follow Christ. The evil one has but one aim — the complete domination of our heart, mind, and will for his kingdom. And he will use any means to draw us from good to evil, from truth to deception, from light to darkness, and from life to death. There are no neutral parties in this spiritual battle. We are either for or against the kingdom of God. The choice is ours and God's grace is available to choose for his rule in our lives.

When Jesus spoke about division he likely had in mind the prophecy of Micah: a man's enemies are the men of his own household (Micah 7:6). The love of God compels us to choose who will be first in our lives. To place any relationship or anything else above God is a form of idolatry. Jesus challenges his disciples to

examine who they love first and foremost. A true disciple loves God above all else and is willing to forsake all for Jesus Christ. Jesus insists that his disciples give him the loyalty which is only due to God, a loyalty which is higher than spouse or kin. It is possible that family and friends can become our enemies, if the thought of them keeps us from doing what we know God wants us to do.

True love for God compels us to express charity towards our neighbor who is created in the image and likeness of God. Jesus declared that any kindness shown and any help given to the people of Christ will not lose its reward. Jesus never refused to give to anyone in need who asked for his help. As his disciples we are called to be kind and generous as he is. Jesus sets before his disciples the one goal in life that is worth any sacrifice and that goal is the will of God which produces real life and ultimate and completely satisfying peace. Does the love of Jesus Christ compel you to put God first in all you do (2 Corinthians 5:14)?

"Lord, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has conceived the things you have prepared for those who love you. Set us ablaze with the fire of the Holy Spirit, that we may love you in and above all things and so receive the rewards you have promised us through Christ our Lord." (from A Christian's Prayer Book)

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