

## Readings & Reflection for the 12<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Year II

FIRST READING: Kings 19:9b-11, 14-21, 31-35a, 36

A reading from the second Book of Kings:

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, sent envoys to Hezekiah with this message: "Thus shall you say to Hezekiah, king of Judah: 'Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by saying that Jerusalem will not be handed over to the king of Assyria. You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all other countries: they doomed them! Will you, then, be saved?'" Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; then he went up to the temple of the LORD, and spreading it out before him, he prayed in the LORD's presence: "O LORD, God of Israel, enthroned upon the cherubim! You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made the heavens and the earth. Incline your ear, O LORD, and listen! Open your eyes, O LORD, and see! Hear the words of Sennacherib which he sent to taunt the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, and cast their gods into the fire; they destroyed them because they were not gods, but the work of human hands, wood and stone. Therefore, O LORD, our God, save us from the power of this man, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God." Then Isaiah, son of Amoz, sent this message to Hezekiah: "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, in answer to your prayer for help against Sennacherib, king of Assyria: I have listened! This is the word the LORD has spoken concerning him: "'She despises you, laughs you to scorn, the virgin daughter Zion! Behind you she wags her head, daughter Jerusalem. "'For out of Jerusalem shall come a remnant, and from Mount Zion, survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.' "Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: 'He shall not reach this city, nor shoot an arrow at it, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast up siege-works against it. He shall return by the same way he came, without entering the city, says the LORD. I will shield and save this city for my own sake, and for the sake of my servant David.'" That night the angel of the LORD went forth and struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. So Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, broke camp, and went back home to Nineveh.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL Psalm 48:2-3ab, 3cd-4, 10-11

***God upholds his city for ever.***

Great is the LORD and wholly to be praised in the city of our God. His holy mountain, fairest of heights, is the joy of all the earth.

***God upholds his city for ever.***

Mount Zion, "the recesses of the North," is the city of the great King. God is with her castles; renowned is he as a stronghold.

***God upholds his city for ever.***

O God, we ponder your mercy within your temple. As your name, O God, so also your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Of justice your right hand is full.

## ***God upholds his city for ever.***

Gospel: Matthew 7:6, 12-14

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew:

Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, or throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot, and turn and tear you to pieces. "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the Law and the Prophets. "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few."

The Gospel of the Lord.

### **Reflection for the 12<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Year II**

We all make plans for our future. We make investments, set up itineraries for our vacations and what we'll watch tonight on TV. How often does the stock market fluctuate? Who planned for COVID for travelling? A friend may call us tonight on the phone. Sennacherib made a promise to his fellow king, Hezekiah, "Resistance is futile; surrender now before I crush you!" Hezekiah prayed and God revealed new plans. Isaiah the prophet brought the message and reprieve. The Assyrian forces may have been hit with plague for their king called them home. But his message brought ambiguity; why mention a remnant from Zion if all the people would be spared. Soon our lectionary daily sequence of reading will change from narrative to prophecy; from history to salvation of God's people. Next Monday we'll start with the prophet Amos. Jerusalem will fall within just over one hundred years. The Babylonians would attack and destroy Jerusalem, the temple, kill the king and carry the citizens into captivity. Isaiah's prophecy conveys this threat.

From today's gospel, a contemporary version of Jesus' parable can be appropriate. Never let your dog eat your smart phone without having insurance. Why did Jesus talk about dogs and pigs? Why would anyone give what's holy to dogs or let pigs play with mother's string of pearls? Could Jesus be talking about people? People who will never believe? Jesus may be talking about discretion and some restraint to his apostles who will be spreading the gospel to all people. Be brave but not stupid. Never talk religion and politics at the Thanksgiving dinner. He may have just given his missionaries advice that may save their lives. There will be people who won't hear the Word. There were and still are. Be cautious and be careful. We who are Jesus' witnesses are valuable to him, personally. He seems to be saying trust your intuition and know your audience.

Jesus has just taught the Golden Rule, common to all the world's religions, in one way or another and in these or similar words. In this context and following Jesus' words of caution, he's told his followers to go one step more; to respect those who disagree as we want them to respect us. This, from the mouth of Jesus could inspire all those divided by politics, practice and opinion to seek the presence of Jesus in the people with whom we disagree. We all have opinions like we all have mouths. If we keep our mouths shut and listen to others, maybe they can then listen to us. Giving an example of Jesus in the way we behave speaks more clearly than raised voices.

Enter through the narrow gate. Many years ago I worked, in 1975 as a seminarian at St. Boniface Church, of happy memory, it remains an empty shell and Chicago movie set just off the Kennedy Expressway just before the Ogden Avenue exit heading into the loop. On Ashland Avenue just north of Augusta Boulevard on the west side of the street, there was a second floor flat that housed a small Hispanic Pentecostal Church called La Iglesia de la Estrada Estrecha or, in English, the Church of the Narrow Stairway in connection with the Narrow Gate. One person at a time could only fit in the width of the climb. A good image, for sure, but that's not what Jesus meant.

Most of us focus, when we hear Jesus' words, on the many who fail to find the gate and enter. When we do that, we are the ones who observe and judge. When we do that, we lack focus on the prize that Jesus has offered us; eternal life. We're too busy judging and acting as God and on our road to destruction. Let God be God. In that grace we can pray for others who seem to have not found their way. God leads us, then, on our way to the Kingdom of God. If we have kids we have the responsibility to teach, guide, love and forgive them. When they are young they are our responsibility. If we have done our Jobs, when as adults they and not we are responsible to God for the lives they lead. God has no grandchildren. We are all God's beloved children and siblings with Jesus and each other. The gauge to know if we are on the path comes through God's gift of faith out of love for us and how we can love and show God to others.

May God give us all the grace to continue on our way.

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