

FIRST READING: Acts of the Apostles 18:1-8

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles:

Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. He went to visit them and, because he practiced the same trade, stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. Every sabbath, he entered into discussions in the synagogue, attempting to convince both Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began to occupy himself totally with preaching the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. When they opposed him and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your heads! I am clear of responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." So he left there and went to a house belonging to a man named Titus Justus, a worshiper of God; his house was next to a synagogue. Crispus, the synagogue official, came to believe in the Lord along with his entire household, and many of the Corinthians who heard believed and were baptized.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4

The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done wondrous deeds; His right hand has won victory for him, his holy arm.

The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

The LORD has made his salvation known: in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice. He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness toward the house of Israel.

The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God. Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands; break into song; sing praise.

The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

GOSPEL: John 16:16-20

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to John:

Jesus said to his disciples: "A little while and you will no longer see me, and again a little while later and you will see me." So some of his disciples said to one another, "What does this mean that he is saying to us, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me,' and 'Because I am going to the Father'?" So they said, "What is this 'little while' of which he speaks? We do not know what he means." Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Are you discussing with one another what I said, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'? Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection for the 6th Tuesday of Easter

This is the first Tuesday morning mass that I have had in a while. My homilette I will deliver live. I'm a bit excited.

This first reading, on the surface, has always seemed an enigma. The jailor was ready to kill himself when he thought his prisoners had escaped. So why did he let them out of jail and into his home? If they had escaped, that was his fault. Paul and Barnabas showed him honor and respect by staying in place. He didn't lose face. Inviting them into his home was an act of hospitality on his part in response to their respect. Since he was in the jail too, he heard their prayers and songs. They had influenced and impressed him with their faith.

Earthquakes are common in the Middle East. The miraculous nature of its occurrence was not the point of the story. The witness to faith in Paul and Barnabas is key. They were unafraid to preach to a hostile audience. They were willing to be beaten and held overnight in jail for being a public nuisance. They would have been let go in the morning anyway. This was a local jail not a prison.

The jailor and his whole household received the gift of faith and as a result. Paul and Barnabas baptized them all. These stories tell the tale of a growing and dynamic faith. This was a story of how the Holy Spirit worked through them and within the new believers. The apostles' Acts were the result of the Act of God. That there's no mention of any ramifications of the jailor's action proves the point.

Is there any application for this success story for us? Paul and Barnabas were attacked by a mob, beaten and held in jail overnight. Yet they won over a family to the faith. Who would know that the Spirit was at work working through this painful experience? Did Paul and Barnabas have the sense that this hardship was a gift of God? Maybe in hindsight. Can we search for the grace of God amid our troubles? They may not be troubles at all but an opportunity to glimpse God.

What is Jesus' basic message in John's gospel today? There can be hope hiding in grief. Jesus was in the process of saying good bye to his lads. Jesus has imparted what he knows will happen as a result of his passion and death; resurrection, return to the Father and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Remember the eleven were yet to experience these things. They only saw the death of Jesus coming; doom and gloom not hope. Jesus intended his prescience to give the disciples a way to cope in their grief. Perhaps Jesus does the same for us, if we look and listen for him.

We have a pretty good idea of what sin, righteousness and condemnation are. Righteousness is being good, sin is being bad and condemnation is the result of sin. That's not the way Jesus used them. Sin is having no faith. Since faith is a gift from God that we receive unbidden, what do we make of this definition? The early Church expected all of Judaism to embrace Jesus. That has never happened. As a matter of fact, after the year 70, of the Common Era, believers in Jesus were excluded from synagogues. This marked the end of Christianity being another form of Judaism. The first people to persecute Christians were Jewish. St. Paul did so before his conversion. This is the context of Jesus' prediction. Jesus focused on the sin, here, not the sinners. Sin prevented faith. Sin exists in part of us all.

Righteousness is Jesus return to the Father. What did Jesus just tell us was the result if his return? He would send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will convict the world; of what? Jesus has died for our sin thus saving us. Jesus rose from the dead and gave us his new life. In John, the world is what will drive the denial of faith, resistance to the gospel and the persecution of believers. Believers constitute the Church which is the Body of Christ on Earth in the time of the Spirit. Righteousness is the in dwelling life of the Spirit that all believers share.

What is condemnation? The ruler of this world has been condemned. Is the ruler of the world Satan? In scriptures, no. God is both creator and thus the true ruler of the world. Jesus won the world back to God. Our sin is the ruler to which Jesus refers. Jesus condemned our sins through his death. That is he forgave us; sin has no more claim on us. Jesus has won us all for his Father. John has a symbolic and sometimes obscure way to say things. I think John has done this to get us to read it over and over until we get it. He wants us to become intimate with the Word of God who is Jesus. I won't refuse.

Mystery is all around us. Mystery is also within us. Today we have witnessed the Spirit as it worked in a family's coming to faith which transformed people's suffering into the means of God's gift. We have witnessed the compassion of Jesus as he prepared the disciples for what was yet to come. We see these events with the same eyes with which we see each other; our eyes of faith. We can see the mystery of God, or at least its glimpse.

May our lives reveal to others God's abiding mystery.

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