

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 14:6

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the way, the truth and the life, says the Lord;

no one comes to the Father, except through me.

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 13:22-30; L123C

Jesus passed through towns and villages, teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem.

Someone asked him,

“Lord, will only a few people be saved?”

He answered them,

“Strive to enter through the narrow gate,

for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter

but will not be strong enough.

After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door,

then will you stand outside knocking and saying,

‘Lord, open the door for us.’

He will say to you in reply,

‘I do not know where you are from.’

And you will say,

‘We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.’

Then he will say to you,

‘I do not know where you are from.

Depart from me, all you evildoers!’

And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth

when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God

and you yourselves cast out.

And people will come from the east and the west

and from the north and the south

and will recline at table in the kingdom of God.

For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

Reflecting on the Gospel

Nobody likes disappointment. Dealing with it can be a difficult lesson that many of us learn in childhood, and some still struggle to learn as adults! We can avoid disappointment in a number of ways including being prepared, having proper expectations, and knowing a given situation. When we employ these strategies our chances for disappointment diminish. For example, we don't expect a friend who is chronically late to be punctual. It's a matter of managing expectations.

Today's gospel gives us a somewhat troubling story of those who were undoubtedly disappointed. Can we imagine standing, knocking on the door to the house only to be told by the master, “I do not know where you are from”? or even more, “Depart from me, all you evildoers!” Yet this is precisely the story Jesus tells someone who asks whether only a few will be saved. Matthew (7:21-23; 25:31-46) tells a similar story and we are thereby reminded that simply knowing the Lord is not enough to be saved. Jesus exhorts the man to enter through the narrow door. And what is more, he is advised not to wait too late, for there will come a time when the master will lock the door.



This passage and others in the gospels like it remind us of an uncomfortable, and perhaps even disappointing, truth. The effective answer to the man's question about salvation is that many will attempt it but not be able. And some of

those who know the Lord, who ate and drank in his company, are those who will be shut out. Such a message is far from the feel good, open wide, broad path to salvation that we might imagine. And the warning to those who know the Lord should fall squarely on us.

Still, those who will be saved may not be those who expect it, for in an echo of Mary's canticle and earlier Lucan themes, there will be a reversal of fortune. “[S]ome are last who will be first, / and some are first who will be last.” Moreover, salvation is not limited to a particular group of people as they will come from all directions to recline at table in the kingdom of God.

Are we open to disappointment? Or do we need to be prepared, manage our expectations, and know the given situation? Salvation is for all; many attempt to enter but are not strong enough. Even those who know the Lord are not guaranteed salvation.

Living the Paschal Mystery

A relationship with Christ is not an insurance policy whereby we pay our premiums and expect to receive a settlement when needed. This relationship with the Son of God is not so transactional that we do x, y, and z and Jesus in return grants salvation. If such were the case we would be effectively earning our own salvation by our works. But salvation is a free gift, undeserved, no matter how much we might feel we deserve it.

The master locks the door on the evildoers, barring entry to them. The frightening thing is that some of those locked out know the Lord. Would they consider themselves evildoers? Not likely.

Where are we in this story? Are we striving to enter through the narrow door? Are we waiting until later before we make up our minds? When will the door be shut, not in some apocalyptic sense, but when we come to the end of our own personal life? There will be a reversal of fortune. Let us be prepared and manage our expectations lest we be disappointed.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: And people will come from the east and the west / and from the north and the south / and will recline at table in the kingdom of God.

To the point: In today’s gospel we hear a paradox. Jesus urges his followers to “enter through the narrow gate,” but this constricted entrance leads to an abundant gathering that includes people from the four corners of the world. All people are welcome in the kingdom of God. Not because of their lineage, race, gender, or ancestors, but because they have followed the narrow way of peace and love: the way of Christ.

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: The first reading comes from the end of the book of the prophet Isaiah. In the gospel Jesus is travelling to Jerusalem to offer himself on the cross as a complete self-gift to humanity and to God. Isaiah shares a vision of others coming to Jerusalem as well. God is gathering “nations of every language” to see God’s glory. In Jerusalem, at the house of the Lord they will present their grain, and also themselves “as an offering to the LORD.”

to experience: Jesus and Isaiah paint a picture of God’s kingdom where all of creation is at home. These words would have challenged the people who originally heard them, and should challenge us today. We are not necessarily members of this kingdom because of the religion we identify with or our observance of the sacraments. Jesus points to the “narrow gate” that leads to this kingdom. Perhaps it is narrow because of all of the things that can bar our entry like fear, hatred, and pride. To enter into this kingdom that welcomes all people, we must also know radical hospitality. We can enter into the kingdom of God only if we can delight in the others who are also welcome there.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: The paradox we saw in the gospel reading is also present in the psalm. This shortest of all psalms calls for nothing less than every nation and person to extol and praise the Lord. Even as a young nation, Israel knew their God was not only theirs alone, but also desired to gather all nations, all people together in unity. Jesus shares this vision, reminding the people of his own ancestry, and reminding us today that the kingdom is not ours alone. It does not belong to just one nation, one religion, or one race. The kingdom of God is as expansive as God’s mercy and faithfulness.

to psalmist preparation: As you prepare to sing this Sunday’s psalm, pause to consider how your community welcomes in those who are outside of its familiar borders. How do you show hospitality in your ministry and in your life as a Christian?

PROMPTS FOR FAITH-SHARING

The prophet Isaiah shares a vision of peoples of all nations and tongues converging on Jerusalem as an offering to the Lord. What place does Jerusalem hold in your journey of faith?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

The Letter to the Hebrews says, “[D]o not disdain the discipline of the Lord.” How have you experienced the Lord’s discipline? What place does discipline have in your spiritual life?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Jesus tells the people, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate.” What do you think he is referring to? Where in your life do you find the “narrow gate”?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

How does your family or parish welcome the stranger in your midst? How do you make room in your life for those that are different from you?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....