

GOSPEL MEDITATION - ENCOURAGE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

August 22, 2021

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

“Far be it from us to forsake the Lord for the service of other gods.” We struggle with our gods. They appear in the forms of things like money, power, prestige, popularity, privilege, and self-fulfillment. We like these “gods” because they make us feel good and ask very little of us in return. When we worship them, we worship ourselves. How can you go wrong with that? We buy into the illusion that if something can give us a comfortable life, free of want and need, then it is worth setting other things aside to pursue it. In essence, we sell our souls. Our struggle with “who is God” and to whom do we belong is a real one and one that can easily find us empty and experiencing disillusionment.

The devil tempted Jesus in the desert and promised him more. We are promised “more.” But in pursuing the more and the satisfying we lose track of the cost, and the cost is great. We sacrifice our very life in pursuit of something disguised as life. We sacrifice truth for something that only “feels” true. While the true and real God certainly promises us many things, many things are also required. It is not about the warm and secure feelings and self-absorption the world wants to provide, but of giving back. There can be no lukewarm stance with regard to faith. If we are in, then faith in Jesus Christ asks us to do some difficult things: work in service of God’s kingdom (not our own), love our enemies, offer no resistance to injury, that we must die to ourselves in order to find ourselves, and trust that Jesus truly gives us his flesh and blood to eat and drink. These are hard things to accept and even harder to put into practice. It is no wonder that many, who may be attracted to Jesus at first, walk away in pursuit of the more self-satisfying gods.

But truth is truth. If we cannot accept it from the lips of Jesus Christ, then where else will we find it? To whom can we go? There is only one source of truth and life, Jesus Christ. Jesus has the words of eternal life and if we do not go to him, then where else will we find this gift? But we must be faithful and buy into the whole package deal that requires sacrifice and fidelity. When we do, we find ourselves, through the Body and Blood of Christ, connected to the Source of all life and then intimately bound with our brothers and sisters. We all have to decide whether we want to stay or go and if we can accept what Jesus has to say. It’s a choice we all have to make.

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