

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Fifth Sunday of Lent, March 22, 2015

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on the Gospel Reading for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

I HATE MY LIFE!

"I hate my life!" If parents learned their teenager had posted those words on his or her Facebook page or "tweeted" them to a friend, they obviously would be concerned. The same kind of concern would fill the heart of a wife if she heard her husband mumbling those words day after day as he returned home from work.

When people we care about start saying, "I hate my life!" that raises red flags. Obviously those who express such sentiments are in pain, unhappy, and perhaps even so upset and distraught that they may be contemplating suicide to end their suffering.

In this Sunday's Gospel (John 12:20-33) we hear Jesus express a sentiment that seems to indicate that hating one's life is required of his disciples. Jesus says, "Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life."

Hearing that teaching of Jesus we might think that we have to hate life on earth if we hope to gain eternal life in heaven.

Yet in his ministry Jesus showed a great love for life on earth and did all he could to preserve it. He fed those who were hungry. He was concerned with those whose lives were weighted down by poverty and injustice. He healed the sick. He came to the rescue of those who were near death. He even brought the dead back to life as he did in the case of Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow of Nain. Jesus viewed life as a precious gift from God to be protected and safeguarded.

When Jesus speaks of hating life in this world, he does so in the same way he speaks of hating one's parents. "If any one comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26)

Jesus did not hate his mother any more that he hated his life in this world. If he did hate his life, then why did he ask his heavenly Father to remove the cup of suffering and death that awaited him. "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39)

When Jesus uses the word "hate" he uses an exaggerated and dramatic way of speaking. In calling us to hate our parents, he tells us that no human relationship, not even that of parent and child, can come before a relationship with him.

In telling us to hate life in this world, Jesus is telling us that life in this world is not to be valued above all else. The ultimate value is doing God's will and living as faithful children of our heavenly Father. Jesus dramatically showed us what he meant when he remained true to his relationship with his Father even though it led to death on the cross.

Life, Jesus tells us, is eternally preserved when we love others and love God even more than we love life in this world. “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life.”

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