

## **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, July 23, 2017**

### ***The Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time***

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings 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

#### **NOT ALL WIN!**

The Academy Awards, the Pulitzer Prize, honors from the Recording Academy, and the Nobel Prize all have something in common. They all involve judgment and evaluation.

Those awards are given to individuals who meet certain standards and whose work is judged outstanding.

Not every actor gets an Oscar, not every writer receives a Pulitzer, not every musician earns a Grammy, and not every outstanding scientist is recognized with a Nobel Prize.

In life, not everyone gets an award.

Yet when it comes to the spiritual life, many people seem to believe otherwise. They believe everyone gets first prize, everyone is awarded a place in the kingdom of heaven. After all, isn't God merciful, kind, and understanding? They see God as simply welcoming everyone to himself regardless of what a person has done or not done. They cannot picture God as making judgments.

While that may be how some people think, that idea does not correspond to what we hear in this Sunday's Gospel. (Matthew 13:25-43)

There Jesus tells a parable that speaks of mercy, but it also speaks of judgment.

In the parable, we hear of weeds that are discovered growing in a field that was sown with good seed. When the slaves ask the owner of the land if the weeds should be pulled out, they are told to do nothing until the growing season is over. Then a separation will be made. The wheat will be harvested and stored, the weeds will be collected and burned.

The owner shows forbearance. He does not act immediately, and God does the same. God shows forbearance and mercy to sinners. For the present, wheat and weeds, saints and sinners, are left untouched.

But when time ends, a judgment is made. As Jesus says, "The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace."

This is not the only time Jesus speaks of people being judged according to their actions and way of living.

Jesus speaks of the Son of Man dividing people into two groups, the good worthy of reward and the evil worthy of punishment, just as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. (Matthew 25:31-45)

Jesus speaks of the contents of a fishing net being judged. The good fish are kept, the bad are thrown away. Just so, Jesus says at the end of time, "The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous." (Matthew 13:49)

Throughout his ministry Jesus called people to repent, to believe, and to live according to the Father's will. Then he commissioned his disciples, his Church, to continue that work. Obviously, Jesus did that for a reason.

If the way a person lives, if the way a person responds to the Gospel, makes no difference, Jesus would have simply come, died and rose, and announced that salvation is won. God is all merciful. God makes no judgments about people.

But that is not the case. At the time God chooses, God judges. That makes what we do in life significant. It gives value to our words and actions. It makes how faithfully we follow the Gospel of supreme consequence.

As we know from experience, prizes are awarded to those judged worthy to receive them. This Sunday, Jesus reminds us that this holds equally true in our spiritual lives. Only "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

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