

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, July 30, 2017

The Seventeenth 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

DECIDING FOR THE KINGDOM

What causes corruption, theft, war, violence, murder, hunger, poverty, abuse, abortion, divorce, discrimination, greed, adultery, and all the other moral evils that darken our world?

The answer to that question can be found in the initial chapters of the Book of Genesis. There we read how the first human beings were confronted with a choice: follow the direction of the tempter or follow the direction of God.

They decided to follow the way of the tempter. As a result, they lost their place in paradise and human life was forever changed, and not for the better. Their wrong decision led to the beginning of evil and sin.

This Sunday's scripture readings focus our attention on decisions.

In the First Reading (1 Kings 3:5, 7-12), God says to King Solomon, "Ask something of me and I will give it to you." In response to that divine offer, Solomon replies, "Give your servant...an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong." Solomon asks God for the wisdom that will allow him to make good decisions. He realizes if he makes the proper decisions, good things will follow for him and his people.

Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 13:44-52) contains a series of parables that also involve choices and decisions.

In the first parable, a man unearths a treasure buried in a field. He recognizes its value and immediately decides to take the necessary steps to make the treasure his own.

In the second parable, a merchant determines he has finally found the pearl of his dreams. So he decides to sell all that he has to buy that gem.

Jesus then tells a parable about fishermen, who after hauling in their net examine their catch. They make decisions concerning each fish. The fish worth keeping go into buckets and the fish judged worthless are thrown away.

Jesus tells those parables as he teaches about the kingdom of heaven.

While we tend to think of that kingdom as a heavenly place that awaits those judged worthy by God, the kingdom might be better understood as the kind of society that begins here when people decide to live according to God's will.

As William Barclay, the noted scripture scholar put it, accepting and following the will of God brings "peace to the heart, joy to the mind, beauty to life." We certainly see that proven in the life of Jesus and the lives of faithful Christians down through the ages.

When people decide to follow the will of God the kingdom grows in our world. When people make bad decisions opposed to the will of God then the darkness deepens and evil grows and spreads.

King Solomon sought wisdom so he could make good decisions. We need to seek that same kind of wisdom so we can recognize the blessings that come in deciding to follow the will of God.

Good decisions bring forth the kingdom of heaven. Bad decisions strengthen the evils plaguing our world.

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