

The Right Attitude

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time- October 23, 2016- Luke 18:9-14

All the readings this week speak in one way or another about the right attitude we must possess if we wish to enter the Kingdom of God. They provide us a framework to understand Jesus' teaching.

From the book of Sirach we hear, **"The Lord is a God of justice, who knows no favorites."** This opening line should cause us to pay attention this week given the reward-laden culture we live in. In this passage, God is seen as a God of justice, mercy and goodness who seeks the same attitude in those who claim him as Lord.

Scripture scholars say that St. Paul has listed his many accomplishments but this is not a bragging right. This is a love letter sent to a younger follower. Paul has been imprisoned. He knows the fate (death) that awaits him. Now he believes he must pass on to the next generation the truth of what it takes to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

"Beloved: I am already being poured out like a libation and the time of my departure is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance."

St. Paul genuinely believes that with the hard work of the gospel also comes an attitude that says we are dependent on God for everything, including the faith that we proclaim. Without God, there is no grace. Without God, we would not be able to remain faithful. So an attitude of complete dependence on God is required. The right attitude is an attitude of gratitude. It comes, not out of a sense of one's one superior piety, but from an understanding that we all must call upon God for mercy every day.

In the gospel, Jesus emphasizes this idea in the gospel. **"Jesus addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else."** The twist in this story is that the one, who keeps the commandments, fasts regularly and tithes, actually compromises his own faith with his flawed attitude of superior piety. He believes because he has done all these things that he should be rewarded.

In contrast, Jesus tells of the tax collector, known in the community as a cheat, to be the one with the right attitude...an attitude of a contrite penitent. **"But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, "O God be merciful to me a sinner."**

Jesus' words to us this week are a simple reminder of what the right attitude can do. **"I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."**

Blessings!


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