

19C SML 2019  
LK 12:32-48

This evening's (morning's) gospel is one in a series of classic examples of those "fire and brimstone" gospels:

**Last week,** "You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you . . ."

**This week,** "You must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

**Next week,** "I have come to light a fire on the earth. How I wish the blaze was ignited."

**The week after,** "There will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves cast out."

They are called fire and brimstone, but they could just as well be called heaven, living water and eternal life gospels, depending on how we enter death, which is why dying is our most important act.

Today's first and second readings teach a lesson in faith. The faith tradition we follow as Catholics did not begin with Our Blessed Lord. It began long before Christ as God prepared the world for the coming of Our Blessed Lord.

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews in today's second reading wrote of the faith of Abraham, our "father in faith," the father of the Jewish people, who lived almost nineteen centuries before Christ. In faith, he and Sarah left their relatives and their homeland to journey to an unknown land where God was leading them. They had faith, too, in God's promise they would have many descendants even though they were without children and growing old.

The writer of the Book of Wisdom takes us several centuries after the time of Abraham, to the time when God's people, in faith, left Egypt to journey for the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses. They left behind a certain, but unpleasant life of slavery for a more uncertain journey through the desert and the wilderness, to an unknown land that God had promised them.

Abraham and Sarah, and Moses and the Israelites made their journey in faith.

"Journey" is such a trite, overused word, but it is used because our fathers in faith literally made journeys. We are all on a journey as well.

It might be toward graduation.

It might be toward finding a job.

It might be toward finding a spouse.

It might be toward fitting into a size 7.

It might be toward surviving the stress of all that's on your plate right now.

But, whatever your journey, time is moving along. And we know from every day experience, that if it is a better place we are journeying toward, we need to adequately prepare ourselves for it.

In our journey through life, there is an event that we definitely need to prepare for. That is the day we are going to meet Our Blessed Lord:

- ✓ not just in prayer,
- ✓ not just in Holy Communion,
- ✓ not just in the other sacraments,
- ✓ not just in the invisible ways in which He comes into our lives,
- ✓ but in a visible, unmistakable way at the end of life's journey.

It is a meeting most of us like to put off as long as possible and many people do not like to even think about it. That's why Our Blessed Lord warns us to prepare for it, because we may tend to procrastinate or just put it out of our minds altogether.

Most people have a favorite biblical character – someone they admire, someone they would like to emulate. Abraham, Sarah, Moses, the Apostles, St. Paul, the list goes on.

There are some who I will define as minimalists, whose favorite biblical character is Dysmas. Dysmas was the good thief.

Mentioned in all four Gospel accounts, the two who were crucified with Our Blessed Lord were called thieves by two of the four evangelists. Whatever else they had stolen in their lives, many would say the one, Dysmas, commonly called “the good thief,” stole at the end, a reward he did not deserve; according to Luke, the first one home, the first one in, was a thief. Right out of the salvation gate, the last was first.

And for some, “the last shall be first” is a very slippery slope, as they will be quick to object, “What’s the point of being a Christian if, in the end, those the likes of the good thief are saved?” Minimalists who ask that should listen to themselves.

- ✓ What’s the point of being first rather than last in serving Our Blessed Lord whom you love?
- ✓ What’s the point of being found rather than lost?
- ✓ What’s the point of knowing the truth rather than living in ignorance?

- ✓ What's the point of being welcomed home like the prodigal son by the waiting father rather than languishing by the pig sties?

What's the point? The question answers itself.

But just in case we do not get the point, the point is that, in this life and in the world to come, those who follow Our Blessed Lord will receive everything they want, if what they want is to follow Jesus. If, on the other hand, following Jesus is not what they want, then the answer to the question, "What's the point?" is there is no point in following Jesus. Living in the way, the truth and the life is evidently preferable to the alternative, which is being lost, ignorant and dead.

No offense, but people who have to ask "What's the point?" probably would not understand the answer to the question anyway.

Minimalists who are banking on the same approach as the "good thief," and who will turn to their Blessed Lord at their final hour and ask Our Blessed Lord to remember them when He enters His kingdom; those who are banking on the last being first; those who are placing their bets on a death bed conversion are playing the most terminal form of Russian Roulette.