

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 18, 2020
Cycle A

1st Reading: Isaiah 45:1, 4 – 6.

God is planning our redemption by using all resources.

Psalms 96:1, 3, 4 – 5, 7 – 8, 9 – 10.

Give God glory and honor.

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1 – 5b.

We enrich our journey by our works of faith, labors of love, and endurance in hope.

Gospel: Matthew 22:15 – 23.

God created everything, and all belongs to God.

Remember who you are

God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.

After first reading these scriptures this week, I was reminded of a childhood phrase my father would always say to my brother and me (Only a year and 2 months apart) before we would go on any outing. I particularly remember it when he and mom dropped me at the Seminary at the age of 12. He would say have a good time but remember who you are. (It was kind of like being a Schmitt was a big deal and he didn't want us or really me to tarnish the name.)

Very interesting scriptures we are presented with on this 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time. There is no Kingdom parable this week as we have had for last month of Sundays. Some people would pull from our readings that Jesus was for separation of Religion and secular society and every 12 years we get these readings right before our election in this country. I don't believe it is all that black and white; it is far more complex. So, let's take a closer look at our Scriptures.

Isaiah is telling about the rebuild of the Temple after the exile (2nd Exodus) and Cyrus the powerful Persian ruler is really the facilitator of this. His empire was actually larger than the Roman Empire of Jesus' time. He is an important part of salvation history and he was not Jewish, yet he was almost seen as a Davidic descendant in the Messianic vein. So why this selection, because I believe it shows, it demonstrates that God can, God will, God does use whomever is available and able to fulfill God's plan to do just that.

Then we have our Gospel today, Jewish leaders still trying to trap and diminish Jesus' popularity. "Should we pay taxes?", actually I guess the phrasing is "Is it right for us to pay taxes?" that is the trapping question and there is no way Jesus can answer it and come out a "winner"; but Jesus is very aware of their intent and answers their question with another question. Don't you just hate that when someone does that to you? Just answer the question! "Do you have a coin? Whose image and inscription are on it?" Actually 2 questions. Now Jesus has turned the tables on them, and they know it. "Ceasar's" is the answer and that would be Tiberias, and not Julius, who saw himself as sort of a diety. This to a Jewish person would have been seen as sacrelegis; and definitely something they would not want to participate in. Jesus' reply is famous "Then give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar AND TO God what belongs to God."

There is the punch in the gut: "WHAT BELONGS TO GOD?" Well quite simply "everything." We see this clearly in the psalmist's word in Psalm 24: "God owns this planet and all its riches. The earth and every creature belong to God." There is nothing God hasn't created. Remembering Genesis we also know that the human was made in the image and likeness of God. So whose image is the human? So what do we owe to God? I think the answer becomes simply "everything."

In addition to that we, at our Baptisms,(and I was privileged to welcome Avi Hiner into our family yesterday – I actually said I claim you for Christ and then put the sign of the cross on his head) put on the Christ and that calls us to a lot of responsibility to love the other by our witness to our faith. As St. Paul reminds us in the beginning of his letter to the Thessalonians: "Day and night you are in our prayers as we call to mind your work of faith, your labor of love, and your patience of hope in following our Master." Because of that lifestyle it was clear to Paul that God had placed God's hand on them for something special.

So the question becomes for us "Who are you and Whose are you?" Your answer could make all the difference. Jesus felt no necessity to play the religious leaders' game and give them their yes or no answer. Jesus instead spoke to the complexity of living in a here and now world while living into a transforming journey to the full acknowledgement and experience of God's loving presence and desire for us, who have been claimed as God's own.

How will we answer the question, "Will I give to God what is God's?"

God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.