



Homily for 2/17/2019

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time, Year C

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*Do You Want to Be Happy?*<sup>2</sup>

Do you want to be happy? Do you want to be free from fear when things get hot; show no distress but still bear fruit in your life when nothing seems to go right?

In order to do so, you have to have roots, deep roots that stretch towards a source of nourishment that will last longer than the present crisis. In the book of the Prophet Jeremiah, God is symbolized as a stream of water. God is the life-giving water that nourishes the roots of the human soul. God is the only nourishment that does not disappear. God is the only source that will not pass away and is eternal. But if we don't root ourselves in the stream of water that is God, we might as well be like a bush in the desert planted in a lava waste. There are no roots in a lava waste. There are no streams in a lava waste. Everything is burned up and choked out. Thus is the one who puts their trust in human beings, says the prophet.

We were made for God and God made us to be in an intimate relationship with Himself. The more we root ourselves in this reality and surrender to the nourishing life-giving power of God, the more we will flourish in the happiness that we long for, even if things get tough on the outside. But the more we uproot ourselves from our spiritual roots and try to subsist only on shallow earthly things, the more restless and dry we will become. St. Augustine summed it up famously by saying, "*You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.*"

In the Gospel today, Jesus takes up the theme of the prophets with his four-fold 'Blessings and Woes'. The theme of Jeremiah is reprised, with Jesus declaring that people who put their trust in mankind or in worldly things will be severely disappointed when the truth is revealed. When a kingdom of eternal satisfaction and endless joy and the reward of eternal happiness is passed out to the poor, hungry, weeping and infamous of the world, those who have had their fill of earthly riches, food, laughter and fame will be sorely disappointed. They will realize that they had sold their birthright as sons and daughters of God Most High for a mess of pottage that did not satisfy their eternal longings. We were made for Him and yet we put our hope in things far less. In this radical message, Jesus upends the assumptions that worldly man makes about the recipe for happiness - power, pleasure, wealth and fame - and establishes the new Law of the preference for poverty, hunger, weeping and infamy. If the world is all we long for, we are already disappointed, because this is all we get, and it ain't enough for the human soul!

St. Paul echoes that theme when preaching to the Corinthians. "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all!" The danger that Paul warned the Corinthians about is very prevalent even in our day. While the movements of humanism in the past few centuries have been mostly noble and helpful to mankind, promoting progress and human flourishing, there is a dark undercurrent that compromises man's ultimate destiny for merely worldly gain. When we place man as the measure of all things and push out man's eternal destiny, we create a restlessness that no amount of material success and gain can alleviate. It is true, we have more material goods now per capita than ever before. We are rich, but we also have the highest rates of suicide mankind has ever known. We have more food now than ever, but the epidemic of obesity, diabetes and correlated heart-disease and other ailments make us sicker now than ever. We are a generation that has been so immersed in entertainment and satisfaction of the sensual appetites, that we have forgotten what it means to be human beings in real meaningful relationships, and instead prefer screen time to face time with one another. The cult of celebrity and fame is a billion dollar industry fed by our worship of actors and public figures, not to mention politics and politicians, all trying to outdo each other for followers on Twitter. And all for what? So people's private lives can be dragged through the mud to placate our envy, our jealousy and our avarice?



Do not lose hope when you see all these things. They make for a receptive audience to the Good News that Jesus Christ Brings. Just like dry, thirsty land laps up the water when it rains down, so too, souls that are so feed-up by the corruption of this world, will be primed for the Gospel way of life, if not for anything else but the thought of “I’ll try anything different at this point!” I would think that our world as it exists today is ripe soil for evangelization.

Do not be afraid of accepting the Gospel message and applying it for yourself today! Be the good soil that receives the word of God and allows the seed to form deep roots that stretch to the stream of living water. This seed and the soil of your soul can only do this by prayer, that is, dedicated time with and before the Lord, and fasting, the willful and purposeful abstaining from worldly delights to refocus our vision on that which is above. We will be entering Lent in just 24 days. In the Tradition of the Catholic Church, starting this Sunday we would enter the period of pre-Lent called *Septuagesima*. Now is not too early to start your Lenten observances. Now is not too early to attend more assiduously to your life of prayer. It is imperative for us who profess to believe in Christ to get our roots right because the day is coming and is already here when the drought of ungodliness on earth reaches never before seen levels, when the lures and temptations to remain only on a worldly plane are at our fingertips and invade our very ways of thinking and relating with the world. Chose life, not death. Chose blessing, not a curse. Choose beatitude and not woe. Choose God, not the world. Chose Christ and His cross, not the lie of the tempter.

When you do, rejoice and be glad; your reward will be great in heaven.

May Jesus Christ be Praised.