

Fr. Ryan Homily 9/27/20

Read: Ezekiel 18:23-28; Psalm 25:4-9; Philippians 2:1-11; Matthew 21:28-32

You know sometimes when we come to church, Jesus' words can be tough to understand or a bit enigmatic and we ask what is it He's trying to say to us? You know, last week's Gospel may have been that way for some folks. If you remember, when he pays the people who showed up last the same amount as the people who showed up first and we can scratch our heads and wonder why did he do that? Today is not one of those days where Jesus' words are a puzzle, they're not difficult to understand. In fact, the answer to his question which of his two sons did his fathers' will is so obvious if we wonder anything, we might wonder why it's even in the Gospel. Because with all due respect to the Lord and Savior of the Universe the answer might be something like DUH. It's clearly the one who did what he was asked to do even if at first he refused to do it. So, given that and taking that for granted along with what God says in the first reading today, again making us scratch our heads because it's so obvious, when he says to his people whose way isn't fair? If you turn to iniquity you shall die. If you repent you shall live and your past will be blotted out. Why can't you understand that the Lord is saying? So, given how obvious the point that God is making in the scriptures today, what are we to take away? I would suggest there are two things, even if they're things we already know but maybe need to be refreshed. Number one: you and I are not defined by our past even if your past was this morning. That is incredible news that you and I are not defined by our sin. What the Lord is doing through our scriptures today is simply appealing to us in this moment to come home. To know that no matter what is back there, God will take you back now, that there's forgiveness for everyone. This, I think, may be especially important for those who maybe find themselves in church today who do not regularly come for a reason beyond COVID. Well don't take lightly the fact that you have come today and these are the scriptures being provided for you and that God is saying I don't care what's back there. All I care about is right now and where we are going to go in the days ahead. So come back; repent, which literally means to change the way that you think. Stop thinking in the ways of the world. Stop thinking in such a way where God is an extra or an add-on. Something that maybe I'll get to if I get everything else done today that I need to. Stop thinking that way. Instead, start looking to the cross and all that Jesus has done for us. And what our

response to that should be, if indeed He has done that on the cross, and He has. That's His word to us today. That first reading that we heard from the prophet Ezekiel, if you were to keep reading after the passage selected for us today, you would hear God say: I do not delight in the death of the wicked. God doesn't want anyone to perish, He wants us all home. The invitation is there, it's laid out. God is saying I can wipe the past away. So, if you are here for the first time in a while and it's been more than COVID keeping you away, think deeply about the fact that maybe you're here precisely because He wants to say that to you, that your past can be wiped away. And be encouraged by the fact that whatever is back there that all it takes is repentance, all it takes is confession, all it takes is getting back in His good favor, which He longs to have happen. That's God's first word to us today, that you and I are not defined by our past. There is a second word though which is to all of us, especially to those who may tend to be self-righteous, it's found in this beautiful and challenging reading from St Paul. He says, do nothing from selfishness or conceit but in humility. Think of others as better than yourselves. Think of others as better than yourselves. That's the key to a great marriage. That's the key to a great family. And that's the key for a great parish. I was talking with a friend of mine from another parish who has recently gotten involved in the councils and after starting he made this observation to me that there are more politics and subterfuge in the parish than at any company he has ever worked for. And I said to him, oh how true. It can't be that way. How though, practically, are we, you and I, supposed to think of others as better than us than the people sitting around us. A parish, of course, is very diverse in terms of age and income and family and interests and a lot of things, how are we supposed to think of others as better than ourselves. The answer, very simply, is by knowing who we really are and where we really stand. And who are we? We're lucky to be alive. That's who we are. Blessed first of all to have been created. Blessed second of all to have been forgiven. Mercy has leveled the playing field for everyone. There is nobody here, nobody, without a past and there is nobody here without a future. No matter what's in the past as long as we turn around. The key is, as I stressed last week, is to keep our focus on Jesus and all that He has done for us and not on the people around us. And then to live with Him and for Him, live with His love in our hearts. At mass, the priest repeats the words that Jesus spoke at the Last Supper when He says do this in remembrance of me and it doesn't mean say mass a lot, though He was encouraging His disciples to say mass. Jesus means

imitate what you are receiving when you come forward for communion. Let what happens when you come forward to receive the Lord Jesus in the flesh, under the appearance of bread, let Him so transform us that we do for one another as He has done for us. What has He done for us? He has poured out His life. As He has done so we must do. We live in a culture which is tearing itself apart. That can not be us. The only solution is to turn to the Lord and let Him love and live through us and that's up to each one of us. Let's be mindful of the power God puts into our souls when we receive Him in the Eucharist. Let's hear Him say to us do this, pour your life out starting with those who are at home, in memory of me. And let's pray for this parish family that they will say about us what they once said about the early Christians. See how they love one another. Which does not mean see how nice they are. It means see how they go out of their way to serve each other. Thinking of one another as better than themselves.

Amen