

8th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Sirach 27. 4-7, 1 Cor. 15. 54-58, Lk. 6. 39-45

Today's Gospel is the last part of the Sermon on the Plains from St. Luke. Today the first reading is from the Book of Sirach. The Book of Sirach belongs within the Wisdom literature. Ben Sira originally wrote this book in Hebrew. Sira was writing instructions for his boys at his school. The Book of Sirach is full of traditional Jewish wisdom and morals. The Book of Sirach goes by many names, such as, Sirach, Ecclesiasticus or simply Book of Instruction.

In today's reading from Sirach or the Book of Instruction, the focus is that man's reasoning and conversation reflect his true worth. Sirach uses the visual of a sieve. A sieve is used to sift grain or corn. The meal will pass through the mesh, while the straw and dung of the oxen are sieved out. The comparison he is making is the faults of man cannot be sieved out as they become evident when he speaks. Sirach further illustrates this by saying "the fruit of the tree shows the care it has had." The fruits are a result of a person's faith, hope and love. It reflects a person's relationship with God as can be seen or heard through one's speech.

In today's Gospel Jesus uses parables to illustrate his points. First he uses the question, "can a blind person guide a blind person?" Think of it this way If you were a blind person and you were about to cross a busy road would you want another blind person to guide you across the road or someone who could see. Jesus is metaphorically speaking about the teacher and disciple relationship. As you seek a relationship with God would you follow someone who does not know God nor follow God. Would you listen to their preaching or teaching? Our goal is to become good Disciples (those who choose to follow Christ). Jesus is challenging us to follow Him as opposed to others.

Jesus teaches the necessity of humility and true charity as an inspiration of our external acts. Our primary guide is the Ten Commandments and the Two Great Love Commandments. Our actions and our words must be a demonstration of our love of God and our neighbor. These actions lead us to good virtues, which are habitual and firm dispositions to do good.

All too often, because of our humanity we judge others. It is easy to see and call out others faults. Jesus is pointing out that it is hypocritical to correct others - the splinter in their eye while not dealing with our own similar or even greater

faults – the wooden beam in our eye. Pride makes it simple to look down on others. We need to combat our pride by working on our humility.

When we become truly focused on our own failings and faults we can address our imperfections. We receive graces from God which allow us to grow in Faith, Hope and Love. We can do this with a daily reflection of conscience. Our teacher, Jesus Christ leads us and guides us through the Sacred Scriptures, Sacred Tradition and grants us the graces we need through the most Holy Sacraments of the Church.

Jesus uses the analogy of “a good tree does not bear rotten fruit...a good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good.” Jesus is telling us we have a choice. We can choose between good and evil. Jesus is asking us to remember our own frailty, our own humanity. Just as he remembered his humanity and died for our sins, so we have the opportunity to live by his example and ‘be’ people of humility. The Book of Proverbs tells us, “When pride come, then comes disgrace; but with the humble is wisdom” (11.2)

Throughout the Bible the phrase “Fear of the Lord” is used almost 150 times. In Proverbs 1.7 it says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” This fear of the Lord is not one in which I am scared, rather it is the fear of being separated from God. It also means approaching God with profound reverence and awe, cultivating in your heart an awareness of God’s majesty and respect for his authority. Fear of the Lord is not only foundational in the spiritual life, but it’s also transformative!

As we prepare to enter the season of Lent, let us pray. May we pray that each one of us individually may look inside ourselves. That we may look at our weaknesses. Through prayer, the greatest prayer, our most sacred Mass may we grow in our love of God. Pray for the graces to become a saint and that we may acknowledge that the mercy of God is responsible for our graces and actions. Let us pray that our words, which can be sharper than a two-edged sword, rather may we be full of honesty and love. May we use the Sacraments of the Church to receive the graces we need to grow in love of neighbor and God. May we turn to the Sacrament of Reconciliation where we should not fear the confessional but rather let us embrace and acknowledge our need for healing so we may bear not just good fruit, but as good disciples may we, as our Divine teacher Jesus Christ desires of us, to be great fruit. Let our words and actions demonstrate our love of God and neighbor.