



Fourth Sunday Ordinary Time. 2005

Zephaniah 2: 3, 3: 12-13 1 Corinthians 1: 26-31 Matthew 5: 1-12

In fabric shops you can usually find a bin marked “remnants”. The piles of different colours and textures create a fascinating mixture that hints at the splendour of the great rolls of fabric now reduced to scraps.

Zephaniah uses the imagery of remnant when he speaks of small communities who remain faithful in the midst of those people who have given up hope in the future and have abandoned the building of the city of God. The city of God has become a city of greed, violence and self-satisfaction.

The prophet message is simple, “Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth, seek justice, seek humility, follow God’s ways.”

Matthew introduces us to the same message from Jesus given in a form we call the Beatitudes. Jesus sees the crowd so he goes “to the mountain” and sits down to teach. For Matthew the mountain is the place of God, it is a place of revelation, prayer, healing and teaching.

As at Mt. Sinai, God will speak, this time through his faithful servant, Jesus, the Obedient One. For the first time the Son of God will solemnly proclaim his gospel to Israel. Such an occasion will offer the essence of the Kingdom vision. If the Beatitudes are *the new way* then we need to be familiar not just with the form but especially with the spirit.

The first thing that strikes us is that being a kingdom person is about joy. Full of grace, happy, blessed are all different ways of describing a full heart. To believe that God is with us is to take the first step towards true humility. Humility is the ability to discern the real *You* under the masks that have been acquired. As we grow in humility we recognise those areas of our lives that need healing, our sorrow for past sin meets the comfort of God.

Moving from a focus on our own growth we come to see that by our kindness to others we inherit everything. Our true self is found in right relationship with people, all living things and the environment. Our inheritance is to belong to the saints of all religious traditions who strive for a better world.

To say that striving to pattern our lives on God’s vision is our food and drink is to say that active goodness is our priority. God’s grace will fill us to overflowing.

As we proceed on our spiritual journey we need the “fruits” that will bring others to Christ. The first is the quality of mercy. This is an attitude of heart which offers a willingness to forgive. To give to others what has been given to us.

The pure heart is the obedient heart. The heart in Jewish tradition means the centres of thinking, feeling, and desiring. To allow God to help us bring all aspects of our self into harmony will remove anything that stands between our self and God.

To be a peacemaker is to practise the art of community building. There are to be no boundaries created by notions of *them and us*. This calls for a generosity of spirit which allows people to be really free.

In case we forget that even our good intentions can be misread we are reminded that we may suffer at the hands of those who do not want change. To challenge unjust systems; foreign or local, religious or state, may bring pain but the contribution you make will be part of the saving energy of God in the world.

Paul encourages us in our journey by reminding us that we were chosen for our ordinariness. Christ is our life, our wisdom, our holiness.

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