



Twelfth Sunday Ordinary Time 2005

Jeremiah 20: 10-13 Romans 5: 12-15 Matthew 10: 26-33

The Gospel of Matthew has some practical instructions for disciples. Jesus tells the disciples that what he has spoken of in the dark can be proclaimed in the light. This suggests that we judge our moment. Jesus spoke in parables and such a technique suits a climate of mistrust and suspicion but if the group is receptive then it is possible to speak freely. Maybe at this time in our Christian story we need more parables.

We are told not to fear so it is timely to look at some of the fears that may be blocks to ministry. Sometimes we are held back from responding to a need by a lack of self-esteem. We think that there are people who are more gifted, or who will be more successful. Our scriptures show us over and over again, that willingness to let God act in us is the main attribute.

Sometimes we are afraid of interfering or of making false assumptions. Before we can offer to stand alongside someone in difficult times there must be some connectedness, a relationship or friendship. We need to be acting out of respect, love and genuine concern for the wellbeing of the other.

In times of disaster people pull together, old quarrels are forgotten and strangers become friends. One of the reasons that this happens is that the shared experience brings people together. There is no division better helper and the helped.

It is this attitude of mutual giving and receiving which signifies our kinship. If we wish to serve others we need to be prepared to be served in turn. Any sense of power-over has no place in ministry.

Matthew goes on to say that our message must come from the heart. It is not a message for a select few but for all who need comfort. The gospel belongs to all people as the grace of God is for all people.

“Save your fear for those who can destroy your body and your spirit.” This doesn’t mean that we are at the mercy of others. It means watch out for those whose destructive, negative energies impact on our ministry. In the company of heavy drinkers it is hard to remain sober. In the company of the materialistic and selfish it is hard to remain content and centred.

This passage which could make us feel a little depressed is enlivened by the image of the sparrows.

The sparrow was a bird eaten by the poor. You could get two sparrows for a cent. They were the cheapest meat available. If God watches over the sparrows why are we

focussed on the future? As each of our hairs has its own follicle, its own standing place, so too we are not anonymous before God.

As we are challenged sometimes to acknowledge our friends when they are not socially acceptable, so too will our friendship with God will be under strain if we try to keep it a secret.

This is what Jeremiah had to struggle with.

“the Word of the Lord has brought me derision...

I say to myself, I won't mention him...

But then it comes like a fire burning in my heart...

and I can't bear it.”

Let the fire of God's love warm us and the fire of our dedication to God's mission strengthen us so that we may bring comfort to our suffering world.

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