

Trinity XV

September 8, 2024

Galatians 6: 11-18 & Matthew 6: 24-34

“Life without God is a life filled with worries, fear, and anxiety. Life with God is a life filled with joy and peace.”

This statement summarizes the lesson of today’s gospel well. It is part of what we call the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5,6,7). Here, Jesus establishes the rules and regulations of the kingdom of God that he came to preach. Last week, we said that Jesus healed the lepers because there would not be any infirmities or diseases in the kingdom of God. Likewise, the kingdom of God does not tolerate any spirit of fear or anxiety.

We all know how the kings of this world rule over their subjects. They keep their subjects in fear and anxiety. They know that fear is the most basic human feeling. It is in our nervous system and operates like an instinct. So, the kings of this world think that by keeping their subjects in permanent fear, they will be more willing to do whatever the king wants.

Also, when dealing with difficult situations or people, some of us may experience a feeling of anxiety. When it is not addressed, this feeling may prevent you from engaging in social and family relationships, meeting job or school requirements, and participating in other activities.

A person with a spirit of fear will shy away from proclaiming the gospel or upholding the truth of God’s word. But Paul is reminding us that when it comes to preaching the gospel or working for the kingdom of God, we should do it with courage and boldness without fear because the spirit of fear does not come from God. God is not timid, shy, or fearful about anything and because we have the Spirit of God living inside of us, neither should we.

I know very well that, as Christians, there is this internal struggle going on. If we focus on our ability to overcome our struggles and solve our problems, the only thing that we see there is emptiness. When we focus on the threats that can come from doing the work of God, then fear will arise. However, if we are constantly being filled with the Spirit of God (Ephesians 5: 18) then he will help us overcome the spirit of fear.

The main point of Matthew 6: 24-34 is that God is King over everything, and He does not secure his kingship by cultivating anxiety. God does not need to keep us anxious in order to establish his power and authority. Instead, he uses his power to take away our anxiety. All he is asking us to do is to seek the kingdom of heaven first.

We have a similar lesson in the book of Ecclesiastes. In the face of life's apparent emptiness and vanity, Quoeleth teaches us that we must fear God and keep his commandments. Fear, of course, means reverence and respect for God. The very theme of Ecclesiastes is that "all life is meaningless, useless, and vain if it is not in the right relationship with God." I know that we all face some challenges in life. And in response to those life challenges, humanity ought to find meaning in things that we can control. The best way to find meaning in our situations is to be in constant conversation with the Lord. Unless we live by some kind of rule of life that makes prayer, the reading of Scripture, and the sacraments part of the very fabric of our daily lives, we will not be able to please God and live a life free of fear.

When we make compromises and take shortcuts in order to make it in the world, we are on our own. But when commit all our life, all our worries, and all our struggles to God in prayer; when we commit ourselves to do his will in every circumstance, we can trust him for the results. We find meaning, comfort, and peace.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6: 33)

Prayer

Dear Father, we accept that we often forget that you are with us. Help us to put you first in every area of our life. Help us live one day at a time. Help us to not worry about tomorrow but instead focus on what you're doing in our life right now. Through Christ our Lord! Amen.