

Homily of Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

It is a fact that every action has its result. Good action brings good result and bad action brings bad result. In the first reading, Jeremiah prophesied to the people of Judah what would happen to them if they continued in their sin of adulatory and trusting in human allies. He, also, prophesied the blessings they would receive from God if they trusted in God:

“Cursed is the one who trust in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season, but stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth.”

“Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord. He is like a tree planted beside the waters, that stretches out its roots to the stream. It fears not the heat when it comes; its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit.”

The people of Judah did not listen to Jeremiah. They continued their sin of adulatory. Their king, Zedekiah, and his officials allied with Egypt; thereby seeking strength in flesh and turning away from the Lord. The result was that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered Judah, destroyed Jerusalem, and carried Judeans into exile. Bad choice begets bad result.

In the Gospel, Jesus names blessings for those who do what pleases God, and woes for those do who what displeases God:

Blessed (happy, fortunate) are you who are the poor; that is the lowly who walk humbly before God, for the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are now hungry (for righteousness), for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping (in repentance for your sins), for you shall laugh (rejoice). Blessed are you who are denounced and persecuted on the account of your faith in Christ; your reward will be great in heaven.

Woe to those who are ‘rich’ in vices; woe to those who fill and enrich themselves with what belongs to others; woe to those who laugh and derive pleasure from the pain of others; woe to those who are spoken well of and flattered on account of their deceit and hypocrisy. St. Paul, in the second reading, calls those in the ‘woe group’ “most pitiable people of all.”

The first reading and the Gospel bring to mind Deuteronomy 30:15-18: “See, I have today set before you life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord, your God, which I am giving you today, loving the Lord, your God, and walking in his ways, and keeping his commandments, statutes and ordinances... your God, will bless you... If, however, your heart turns away and you do not obey... I tell you today that you will certainly perish... I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord, your God, obeying his voice, and holding fast to him.”

The second reading was St. Paul’s caution to some Corinthians who did not believe in the resurrected Christ. Today too, God’s word is mocked, rationalized, rejected, dismissed, and the messengers and believers of the word are persecuted. But for us who are believers, St. Paul encourages us to rise from our sinfulness as Christ rose from the dead, so that we can become as new as first fruits. We choose life and good and blessing when we rise from our sins.

Nowadays, in the face of our corrupt and violence world, it is difficult to convince many people to remain virtuous. Again, for us believers, the readings and reflection encourage us to continue to persevere in our faith and good work. “Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9). “Happy the just, for it will go well with them, the fruit of their works they will eat. Woe to the wicked! It will go ill with them, with the work of their hands they will be repaid” (Isaiah 3:10-11).

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP