

August 07, 2022
19th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Wis 18:6-9
Ps 33:1, 12, 18-19, 20-22
Heb 11:1-2, 8-19
Mt 24:42, 44

GOING TO HEAVEN AND BE WITH THE LORD JESUS!

During his homily, a priest asked the congregation to raise their hands all who wanted to go to Heaven and be with the Lord Jesus. Everyone in the audience did so – except for one elderly man sitting in the front pew. The priest pointed his finger at him and said, **“Sir, do you mean to tell us that you don’t want to go to Heaven and be with the Lord Jesus?”** **“Sure, I do,”** the old man answered, **“but, Father, the way you put the question, I figured you were getting up a busload for tonight!”**

Kidding aside, I am pretty sure that all of us would like to go to heaven and be with the Lord Jesus. Certainly, we are aware that the journey towards heaven starts here and now. We also know that when we are in ‘right relationship’ with the Lord Jesus is ‘already heaven on earth.’ Intimacy with him can happen now in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist for he is truly and really present. Sad to say though that our awareness and knowledge, at times, does not translate into action.

One of the blockages we, ourselves, put is our attitude of procrastination – **we postpone to another day the mission we can do today.** This attitude of procrastinating comes from thinking that we have all the time in the world when in fact we don’t. The time we will waste today will never ever come back tomorrow. **What if God ends our journey today? Can we humbly tell him that we have done what he asked us to do? Can we say that we have accomplished the mission he entrusted to us?**

In the gospel proclaimed procrastination is one of the mistakes that the servant committed. The servant knew his master’s will and yet he did not act on it. He was aware that his master’s return would be delayed, and his response was to put off his duty/responsibility as a servant. Instead of being effective and sensitive to his master’s will, he became complacent. In the absence of his master, he acted as the master. He abused his power and position. He wasted time. He even squandered/misused the resources of his master. He chose to be on the side of sin than goodness. Thus, the reaction of the master when he returned was understandable.

When our Master and Lord, Jesus Christ comes, **will he find us doing what he commanded us to do? Will he find us as real stewards of his Gospel?**

Procrastination, complacency, idleness, abuse of power and position – these are not the attitudes that will bring us to heaven. Clinging to these behaviors will not make us intimate with the Lord Jesus. These are contrary to the values of Christ. These mindsets will never answer the urgency of the call to make the Good News known to all his people.

What should we do then? What is the Lord Jesus expecting us to be do as his servants/stewards waiting for his return?

In the gospel proclaimed the Lord Jesus spelled out to us what to do. Let me share some with you.

- **First**, he is calling us to detach ourselves from worldly possessions when he said, **“Sell your belongings and give alms.”** This call seems to go against our natural instinct of hoarding and saving for the future. Hence, we ask: **what is the point of his call?** The point is simple – worldly possessions do not have lasting value. It can be taken away by a thief or death itself. On the other hand, the treasure that the Lord Jesus is offering will last for eternity. It will never be lost or destroyed by death. The fools will always cling to the former and let go of the latter. The wise will never hesitate to let go of the former and lovingly embrace the latter. **We are not fools, right?**
- **Second**, he is calling us to be joyful sharers of his gifts. This act springs from the belief that all we have comes from him and it is meant to be shared particularly with the less fortunate. We are operating on the belief that the blessings we received are intended to be used to bless others. Joyful sharing of God’s gifts is stewardship.
- **Third**, he is calling us be proactive in spreading his Gospel. It means that we must get rid of procrastination and complacency regarding his call. Proclaiming the Gospel is a mandate given to each one of us. Ignoring it is to ignore Christ Jesus.
- **Fourth**, he is calling us to be faithful and prudent in doing our duties/responsibilities as stewards. Whether we are alone or with others, he expects us to uphold Christ-like virtues and hold-off vices. Our Christian virtues are best tested when no one is looking at us.
- **Fifth**, he is calling us to use wisely the power and position vested in us. It should not be used to abuse others. Rather, it must be exercised to lift others closer to Christ Jesus. In our Christian context, power and position is always designed for humble and loving service.

Detach from worldly possessions; joyful sharing of God’s gifts; proactive proclamation of the Gospel; faithful and prudent stewardship; and wise exercise of power and position – these are some

of the behaviors that we can put into practice as we continue our journey towards heaven, towards intimacy with Christ Jesus. May Christ Jesus find us living these Christian values when he comes again.

As we offer this Mass, let us pray for each other that we may have the courage and strength to live up the values of Christ Jesus wherever we are, 24/7.

God bless and stay safe!