

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time year A
Matthew 9:36-10:8

We have this grand account of Jesus traveling to *all* the towns and villages of Galilee. And he is described as doing two main things:

1. “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom”
2. “curing every disease and illness”

So, what does this make Jesus? *the* motivational speaker and *the* talented doctor?

What exactly is Jesus doing?

1) Upon first hearing, “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom” sounds terribly vague to me.

Nowadays, when we say, “proclaim the gospel”,

we tend to think of someone reading or reciting Bible verses.

Is Jesus reading Old Testament verses in town square after town square?

No. Jesus is doing so much more.

Firstly, “gospel” means “good news”—which Jesus uniquely proclaims.

The New Testament Scriptures seek to record what Jesus proclaimed.

Jesus, and what He proclaims, are beyond the Scriptures.

Secondly, the kingdom of God, in the end, is God Himself.

And so, Jesus is not reading a message from a book. Jesus is sharing God.

In the end, Jesus is revealing

that God is “at hand”, God is present and accessible

and revealing that, being the God-man, He is the doorway unto God.

Jesus does not inform about God.

Jesus gives God.

2) Jesus also cures every disease and illness.

This second thing that Jesus does is a very manifest consequence of God’s presence.

When God is present, we are healed:

“Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.”

Such proclamation and curing are acts of divine love,

which brings about divine intimacy

—the ultimate purpose of such proclamation and curing.

Jesus always seeks—in all that He does

—to introduce into intimate relationship with God, with the Father.

Hence, “at the sight of the crowds, Jesus’ heart is moved with pity for them, because they were troubled and abandoned”.

Jesus observes that they are

- errant
- *not* in relationship
- “like sheep without a shepherd”

And in His observation, Jesus reveals something unusual about the ways of God. One might have expected Jesus to respond to the shepherd-less sheep by presenting Himself, the Good Shepherd.

“Hey, today’s your lucky day. I just happen to be a really Good Shepherd. No more aimless wandering for you.”

Instead, he asks the disciples to pray for shepherds, otherwise known as *laborers* when the sheep are referred to as the harvest.

Jesus reveals that we are not just recipients of God’s goodness, but are invited actively to *participate* in His goodness.

Christ engages us in a personal relationship, *and* makes of us *ministers*.

In this incident, of course, Jesus establishes a particular ministry.

He ordains *apostles* (“ones who are sent”).

Their mission is none other than the mission of Christ, which is fundamentally to communicate the mystery of God, to lead into God, expressed here in various acts of divine love:

- proclaim the kingdom
- cure the sick
- raise the dead
- cleanse lepers
- expel demons

Quite the job description!

We are *all* ministers, in different ways, however.

Why does Jesus like to associate us to His ministry?

Why does Jesus like to make of us instruments of His merciful love and His light?

Firstly, it expresses greater love for us.

We are not *consumers* of Christ. We are *friends* of Christ.

Jesus shows respect for and trust in His friends,

and He elevates them by association to His work.

We analogously do it in good parenting: *associating* children *to* the task as an expression of respect and trust in their capacity to grow *versus doing* the task *for* the children.

Secondly, so that the spiritual communion that is the Church be a tangible community.

We are sentient, flesh-and-blood beings who, moved by divine love, must develop tangible ties.

Such is the Church as Jesus desires it.

“May they be one” Jesus prays, *really* one.

This sounds fine and dandy.

But where are we in all of this?

In the Church, there are indeed ordained ministers.

But when we think “minister”, we must not only think of them—with all due respect.

We are *all* ministers, “a royal priesthood”, Peter tells (I Peter 2:9).

Our first reading: “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests”. (Exodus 19:6)

And John says, in the Book of Revelation (1:6),

“To him who loved us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,
who has made us into a kingdom, *priests* for his God and father,
to him be glory forever.”

A priest is a mediator, an instrument.

Jesus has equipped each of us to be divine instruments.

Do we let Him fulfill his desire through us?

Jesus wishes to make use of us to enlighten and to heal and to liberate and to cleanse.

Although He works through us when we are “out to lunch”, He can only *really* do so

- if we let Him be our Shepherd and loving Master
- if we actively seek and surrender to Him

At home, at work, on the highway, on the golf course, at the store,

Jesus wants to work through us—if we so desire.

All we must do is desire. Jesus will do the rest.

But we must desire, for Jesus will not trespass our freedom.

In order to be an instrument of God, we must be in His hands.

What is also wondrous, is that, as Jesus makes use of us,

we too are being enlightened and healed and liberated and cleansed.

God gives freely indeed.

We must, in turn, freely give.

Otherwise, we betray the love, and, in the process, stunt our growth and happiness.

Being an instrument is not an option for a true disciple.

It is intrinsic to the love with which we are freely loved.

Let us then desire.

Let us then love...