

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 12:32-48

Another rich discourse from Christ (as though some are not!),
But it is very important to dig deeply, for Jesus says a few apparently disturbing things.
If anything, there is a *lot* of talk about *beatings*
– which makes one uncomfortable, to say the least,
especially coming from the Prince of Peace.

Now I realize that some may be thinking,
“Why couldn’t he have read the *shorter* gospel? Focusing is already hard enough.”
I read the whole passage because what Jesus initially says, this exhortation, if you will,
sheds amazing light on what follows, and is important if we are to read it *well*:

**“Do not be afraid any longer, little flock,
for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.”**

This is nothing short of *amazing*: God, source of all light and all love,
wishes to share with us what he lives, i.e., to give us everything in him.

And because of this, Jesus can speak in all simplicity and truthfulness:

“Relax. Be at peace. Heaven is given to you, gratuitously”.

There is no need for us to fear, we who are God’s “little flock”.

How beautiful: *little flock*, i.e. the intimate group of those who wander the hills,
following the lead of the One who knows...

As suggested, this exhortation sheds light on what follows.

In the light of

- this “divine pouring forth”
- the Father pleased to give us the kingdom

Jesus invites us to invest our hearts wisely.

(We have only so much “heart energy”, and it is so easily wasted...)

Jesus invites us to invest our hearts, *with him*, in the Father,

allowing *the* gift that the Father gives us, the *Holy Spirit*, to free us to do so.

It is important to recall: the Holy Spirit *enables* us.

Left to our own strength and initiative (which we must nonetheless exercise),

we often invest in treasure that thieves can reach and/or moths can destroy.

Why? Because we get stuck in pleasure or we fear or we seek to control or or...

In inviting such “investment”, Jesus invites us to the freedom of the children of God,
i.e. the freedom of those

- who *act*-ually live in intimate relationship with God.
- whose main desire is for a heavenly homeland, i.e. for God’s very life.

Jesus then goes on to give a parable, which, amongst other things, illustrates this freedom of the children of God.

Children of God are like servants whose loins are gird, and whose lamps are lit, awaiting their master's return from a wedding.

- loins gird: long tunic tucked into the belt so that one can easily move
- lamps lit: wick and oil prepared so that be no risk of not seeing
- focused so to welcome the master such that he be able to prolong his celebration

This should be our daily attitude and perspective with respect to God, to Christ.

Which then means, at the end of the day, that I ought to ask myself in all simplicity:

“Did I live today like a servant whose loins are gird, and whose lamp is lit, awaiting my master's return from a wedding?”

In other words, did I live my day ready for Christ who comes, who is coming?

Christ is here, yet he is coming, until (as we read 2 weeks ago) “Christ is all in all” (Col 3:11).

Notice, in the terms that he uses, how dearly Jesus holds such readiness:

- v. 36 *ready*
- v. 37 *vigilant*
- v. 38 *prepared*
- v. 40 *prepared*

Now, the primary place of readiness is the *heart*.

And a ready heart is a *desirous* heart.

Thus, to be ready for Christ is to *want* him, to desire him, to thirst for him.

When we want him (= willful orientation of the heart, not bursting emotions), we are ready, and any hour or day is right.

Then Peter poses a question, which Jesus, in typical fashion, does not directly answer.

It is tempting to want to say, “Come on Jesus, just answer the question for once”.

“Lord, is this parable meant for us or for everyone.”

Jesus could have answered, “for everyone”.

Voila: simple question, simple and concise answer.

But *no*: a whole parable for an answer...

Actually, Jesus *always* answers.

But he always takes the interrogator to a much deeper place.

Jesus takes us, in his responses, to the unfathomable depths of the mystery of God, and there reveals who we are in God.

Here, to Peter, whom is Jesus addressing in a particular way,

Jesus reveals that as we “wait” for God, we are to serve *one another*.

In other words, one of the most appropriate expressions of our thirst for God, for Christ, (and his Second Coming) is service of one another.

Peter is to be entrusted the flock of Christ (cf. John 21:15-18; Matthew 16:15-19).

He is to feed them, and to awaken in them a thirst for the coming of God, of Christ.

Together with the flock, Peter is to prepare the coming of Christ (both daily and definitive coming)

God *also* entrusts persons to *us*, in whom, by our life,
we are to awaken a thirst for the coming of Christ.

Again, we are ready for Christ to the degree we thirst for him.

Any hour and any day is opportune, is right when we thirst for him.

So then what is all this talk about *beatings*?

I don't know about you, but I find it *unsettling*.

Does God, when provoked, have a mean, sadistic edge?

It sure sounds like it! And on a bad day we tend to think he does...

Why would Luke use such a potentially misleading metaphor?

Well, Jesus is always intense when love is on the line.

Jesus wants more than anything to see intense desire in our hearts, i.e. divine love.

He pours himself out for this, and bestows gifts for this.

(For example, the Eucharist should awaken an intense longing for the Second Coming.)

God does not beat: he has no arms or fists!

God does not beat: he never inflicts pain!

This is a *parable*. Jesus is speaking *metaphorically*.

We experience pain -- something *like* that from a beating

-- when we realize, in the presence of the master, Christ, whose presence brings to light, that we have abused the gifts and persons he entrusts to us to prepare his coming.

And so this is not about being tested. It is about being *gifted*.

It is not as though our journey on earth is the written exam
and the face-to-face with God upon death is the oral exam.

We have been gifted, and, in the presence of God, all things come to light,
and we are/will be pained to see how much and how often we lack love,
the very love with which he has gifted us...

Let us ask the Holy Spirit

- for such divine sensitivity
- for a thirst for God
- for a generous spirit in the service of one another