

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year C

Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10

Psalm 40:2, 3, 4, 18

Hebrews 12:1-4

Luke 12:49-53

Gathering

(An unlit candle and a Bible open to this week's gospel rest on a cloth-covered table in the gathering place.)

Prayer

(The candle is lit. The leader invites members to a time of quiet attention to the presence of God. After a time of silence, members pray as follows in two alternating groups.)

Buked and Scorned

I: I've been 'buked and I've been scorned
I've been 'buked and I've been scorned
Children, I've been 'buked and I've been scorned
Trying to make this journey all alone

II: You may talk about me sure as you please
Talk about me sure as you please
Children, talk about me sure as you please
Your talk will never drive me down to my knees

All: Jesus died to set me free
Jesus died to set me free
Children, Jesus died to set me free
Nailed to that cross on Calvary

www.negrospirituals.com/songs

(A selection of quiet instrumental music is played.)

HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)

When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: "What draws you to this gospel?" "Where do you resist this gospel?" The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)

Reflection

The Jesus we hear in this week's gospel promises the earth blazing, a baptism of fire, anguish and division. This is not the Jesus many want to hear about. In our culture we often reduce Jesus to a feel good amiable fellow promising us all will be well.

This gospel reminds us that the one who hears and embraces Jesus' life will be joining a life that entails radical change, a life that will inevitably result in division with the ways of the world. The follower of the Way embraces a lifestyle in which money, power, and position become secondary. Service, sacrifice, humility, alms-giving become the norm. The simple living, prayer, sacrifice, discipline to which Jesus calls us present a paradox to the reality of much of daily life today.

Jesus' division from what was going on in the society and popular culture of his time led to his ultimate rejection, suffering, and violent death. But Paul tells us: "For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God."

The cost of discipleship is real. In this week's gospel, Jesus tells us what will happen when we really follow him. The most faithful people I know live with a real sense of purpose and peace. Having embraced the spirit of Jesus, they live in harmony with their moral and ethical choices based on

the gospel. Would that we all were so faithful. The pressures on us all from the world today are substantial. But we are not alone. Paul also assures us that Jesus "endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart." Be strong; do not be afraid.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- ♦ The world about us is so sharply divided against itself, as well as God these days. What is the impact of so much divisiveness on you?
- ♦ Name a time that your faith life has been challenged by society's values. How did you respond?
- ♦ How do you relate to family members who do not share your belief in Jesus and the church?

HEARING THE GOSPEL'S LORD

(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: "What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?" "How are you/we being called to live in response to God's word?" After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)

Response in Action Suggestions

- ♦ Risk standing apart. Say a clear *yes* or *no* sometime this week when you are faced with some contemporary issue that the ways of the world does not treat in the light of gospel values.
- ♦ Set aside ten minutes each day this week in reflection and prayer. Notice where you may be infected with the ways of the world. Pray for deeper fidelity to the Lord.
- ♦ Let your faith shine through good works. Volunteer your time and energy at your local soup kitchen or shelter.

Prayer

(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to

select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: “What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?” “What do you say to him in response?” The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment.

Following this sharing, a member of the community reads the selection that follows.)

Member: People are unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered,

All: Love them anyway.

Member: If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives,

All: Do good anyway.

Member: If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies,

All: Succeed anyway.

Member: The good you do will be forgotten tomorrow,

All: Do good anyway

Member: Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable,

All: Be honest and frank anyway.

Member: What you spent years building may be destroyed overnight,

All: Build anyway.

Member: People really need help but may attack you if you help them,

All: Help people anyway.

Member: Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth,

All: Give the world the best you've got anyway.

Mother Teresa, *A Simple Path*, Lucinda Vardez, Ballantine, New York, p., 185, from a sign on the wall of Shishu Bahvan, the children's home in Calcutta

(With the leader providing a copy of the lyrics, members join in singing a familiar hymn,)

When the song is complete, members exchange a sign of peace.)

