

Cycle C Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1, Gn 18:1-10a

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the terebinth of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. Looking up, Abraham saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said: "Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree. Now that you have come this close to your servant, let me bring you a little food that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way." The men replied, "Very well, do as you have said." Abraham hastened into the tent and told Sarah, "Quick, three measures of fine flour! Knead it and make rolls." He ran to the herd, picked out a tender, choice steer, and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it. Then Abraham got some curds and milk, as well as the steer that had been prepared, and set these before the three men; and he waited on them under the tree while they ate. They asked Abraham, "Where is your wife Sarah?" He replied, "There in the tent." One of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son."

Responsorial Psalm, Ps 15:2-3, 3-4, 5

R. (1a) He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

One who walks blamelessly and does justice; who thinks the truth in his heart and slanders not with his tongue.

R. He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Who harms not his fellow man, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor; by whom the reprobate is despised, while he honors those who fear the LORD.

R. He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Who lends not his money at usury and accepts no bribe against the innocent. One who does these things shall never be disturbed.

R. He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Reading 2, Col 1:24-28

Brothers and sisters: Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church, of which I am a minister in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the word of God, the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past. But now it has been manifested to his holy ones, to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory. It is he whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

Gospel, Lk 10:38-42

Jesus entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

The Scriptures today tell us about being open to the unexpected ways that God comes into our lives so that we can receive His blessings. The 1st reading tells us about the heavenly beings disguised as strangers who became honored guests when Abraham and Sarah offered passionate openness and hospitality. They were rewarded in their old age with the promise of an heir. In the Gospel, however, Martha also offered considerable hospitality to the Lord Jesus, but she seems to be dressed down for doing too much and worrying about all she needed to do in order to make Jesus comfortable. There have been many interpretations of this story of Mary and Martha, but it is obviously a story about contrasts between service and spirituality. Some have said that the spiritual life is superior to the active or practical life. Martin Luther used this verse to prove that there was justification by faith rather than by works. So what was Jesus really trying to tell to us?

We know that Jesus would typically move from village to village counting on the hospitality of someone to house him and feed him. If no one did, then Jesus would move on. Martha welcomed Jesus as an honored guest and set about to prepare for his visit. It is not that she didn't want to also be a disciple, after all she did call him Lord. But, Martha addressed practical things to serve Jesus before getting to the spiritual ones.

Mary however immediately positioned herself at the feet of Jesus to listen. In fact, in their culture the phrase "to sit at someone's feet" usually meant that they were being taught. But, women, in that day, were not to be taught...they were excluded from studying the Hebrew Torah. No doubt Martha must have been angry when she was left with all the work to do while her sister Mary was listening to Jesus. A woman's place was not sitting around listening. They were responsible to prepare everything for the guests. So, why was it that Jesus didn't just say: "*Mary, why don't you go help your sister? She is feeling pressured to get our dinner ready.*" Like so many times in

the New Testament, we hear that instead Jesus goes against established traditions of the day.

Jesus understood the typical role of the woman in ancient society was to serve others, but he wanted women to achieve more balance in their lives. Instead of always doing some activity, they needed to take time to pause and reflect on God. It seemed the opposite was true of men in that culture. The men often studied, and prayed and held discussions about God. So Jesus frequently said to the men that they must “do” the will of God. Jesus wanted everyone, women and men, to have a balance of service and spirituality in their lives. In fact, Jesus was suggesting that we too need this balance in our lives. We are dedicated to our jobs and families, yet we know that we need to take time to practice our faith, to pray and serve others. It is always a challenge.

6 years ago we lost my wife’s mother, Gerry Rock, who we lovingly called GG. She had been living in Georgia for 18 months, and I saw how every morning the first thing she did were her prayers...especially those for her family. She definitely was a self-sacrificing mom who was dedicated to raising 6 kids. Can you imagine having 5 kids under the age of 5?! GG and Bob, my wife’s father, definitely were dedicated Chicago Southside Irish Catholic parents! GG ended up with 16 grandchildren and 21 great grandchildren (now up to 26 or 27, it’s hard to keep track)! Her morning prayers took some time. GG and Jesus had, and I can say still have, a great relationship. I believe everyone who met GG ended up loving her. GG always had a smile to share and a thank you to give to everyone she met. People loved her like no one I have ever known. And, if that was how strangers felt about her, imagine how she impacted her family! Let me share with you what GG’s grandson Pete said happened with her around 26 years ago: “...*your grandparents are sorta the least human of all humans. like i said, they mostly exist. for your whole life. but then one*

day they laugh to tears, and you're shook. you can't unsee it. and what you really can't unsee is all their pain. and fear. and loss. and, of course, their joy. and comfort. and security. and puzzlement. and their intelligence. and loss of such. and their wisdom. and loss of such. ... it all comes at once...my grandma was human, i learned. and i was inspired to be good. and happy. and to have a purpose. and a way big perspective. on everything. ...my grandma changed my life. in that moment. that's one of her likely many stories. it's now the main one i know about her. i just wish she knew it about herself. before she left...I am glad she met my wife.” Pete knows that GG’s legacy of love and life, of service and spirituality, is not over...it lives on in us, her family, and everyone who knew her!

Jesus loves us so much that He is saying to each one of us: *“I know you are busy, and you are doing wonderful things, but take some time for yourself and me. I want to talk to you. Please, take some time to listen to me and learn from me.”*

Only then, after Jesus has refreshed us, is it that we will come to understand it is not just doing good works that are most important. It is about following Jesus being truly attentive to the needs of others, to the common good, that helps bring about the kingdom of God on earth. Taking time to be open to God’s love in our lives... especially when we are hyper-active....it brings a peaceful balance and purpose to our lives.

You see, that’s how Jesus changes our lives, and changes those around us. We who know people like GG truly are blessed by God...they are proof of what can happen when Christ is alive in our lives!