

“Be Doers of the Word”

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle B | September 1, 2024

WISDOM FROM THE CELLS

I remember making the decision to get out of the gang life and go through this debriefing process. I struggled with the decision for months. In a lot of ways, it was the hardest decision I ever had to make. I remember the evil voices telling me not to go. That this was all I knew and was good for. “You’re turning your back on your homies,” “They will be your enemies if you do this.”

I also remember thinking that by coming this way I was admitting that I wasted over 20 years of my life. Even though deep down I knew this to be a fact; admitting it out loud was a big bitter pill to swallow.

The good voice told me that my family deserved better than what I was giving them. I deserved better. The voice told me that I had to wake up and look at my life. “Is this going to be your legacy?” “Think of your family and those that are still fighting to get you out.” “Don’t let their fight be in vain.” “You know right from wrong. Do the right thing.”

I remember it felt like a battle in my mind, in my conscience. I suffered many sleepless nights listening to both the good and evil voice until finally for the first time in a long time... the good voice won.

-Jesse, who is in a California State Prison.



Photo by Robert Cornwall

PENITENTIAL RITE

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.

R. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray:

God,

The words you speak to us are spirit and life. Open our hearts to your words, that they may touch us in the deepest of ourselves.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **R. Amen.**



LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading: Deuteronomy 4: 1-2, 6-8

Moses said to the people: "Now, Israel, hear the statutes and decrees which I am teaching you to observe, that you may live, and may enter in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. In your observance of the commandments of the LORD, your God, which I enjoin upon you, you shall not add to what I command you nor subtract from it. Observe them carefully, for thus will you give evidence of your wisdom and intelligence to the nations, who will hear of all these statutes and say, 'This great nation is truly a wise and intelligent people.' For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the LORD, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him? Or what great nation has statutes and decrees that are as just as this whole law which I am setting before you today?"

The Word of the Lord.
R. Thanks be to God.

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

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

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

R. The one 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. The one 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.
Whoever does these things
shall never be disturbed.

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

Second Reading: James 1: 17-18, 21b-22, 27

Dearest brothers and sisters: All good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change. He willed to give us birth by the word of truth that we may be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you and is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

The Word of the Lord.
R. Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

When the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. —For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles and beds. —So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, "Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?" He responded, "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts. You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition." He summoned the crowd again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile. "From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile."

The Gospel of the Lord.
R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



MEDITATION: SO VERY JUDGMENTAL

(from the eyes of peter)

i watched
zaccheus walk in
his face was stern

one of the groups
had swindled daniel
of some money and
he would never forgive
this thief-once-friend
even if he was related
to his wife

he ceremonially
washed his hands
before he entered
he went through
all the rituals
he was so convinced
of his purity and
that he was close
to god that anything
he asked
he would receive

entering the dining hall
he saw this one
from nazareth
with his disciples
they had been working
all morning
helping a group of widows
still grieving their loss
i was feeling their sorrow
their hearts were broken

we were resting
from the hard work
of being vulnerable
to such pain
these women
never thought
they would be alone
trying to raise children

i watched as daniel
and his friends walked
into the dining hall
he looked angry
he stood above us
staring at us
as we pulled
the bread apart

he came close to jesus
saying loudly

master
i am sure
your good friends here
have not forgotten to
wash their hands
before they eat
i know they would
not want to break
our holy law

at first jesus
did not say anything
then he slowly stood up
he always did this
when he was serious

masters of religion
you are judging us
from your narrow world
you are correct
we have not washed
so this makes us
undesirable to god?

daniel lashed out
looking at me
you say you did not
wash your hands?

daniel
what is it to be
close to god?
do you think
you are closer to god
if you obey all
the laws perfectly?

daniel
there are so many
like you in our religion
who think that
if they obey all the rituals
they are close to god

but daniel
look at your heart
your anger
you are like so many
who spend all their time
worrying if others
are performing

the rituals perfectly

look at my friends
all morning long
they comforted
the widows
this is what is
pleasing to god
do you really think
god cares if
they have not washed?
this does not
matter to god
what god cares about
is what is in our heart
god sees what is
really there in the places
you can't simply
wash clean

all day you look
to find others
who are not
washing utensils
who have not
cleaned their hands
who have touched
someone impure

daniel's anger
burst forth
we have been
commanded to obey
these ritual laws
your lack of respect
for the law
is blasphemous
how can you think
you are close to god
when you do not
obey these rules?
at that moment
the widows and
their children entered
the dining hall
they sat down
hungry
and we began
to help them
with food

daniel was repulsed
he did not care
if they were suffering

what he cared about
was if they had washed
their hands

jesus said:
wise leaders
there will always
be some like you
who do not care about
the suffering of
the human person
who do not care
how broken and
wounded some are

there will always be
some like you
who get it backwards
who do not understand
what it is to be
close to god
so many times
your heart will be filled
with darkness
while on the outside
you will be smiling
with self-righteousness

the widows and
children laughed
celebrating in the midst
of deep sorrow
there was a real joy
coming from their table

jesus went over and
sat down with them

daniel
indignant
walked over to the basin
and washed his hands
of all the impurity
he felt in the room

how far away
he said as he left
how far away
you all are from god

when will you ever learn?



REFLECTION: I remember a time I was quick to judge someone and I was wrong and hurt this person... I remember... I remember...

OUR FATHER

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against
us, and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**R. For the kingdom, the power and the
glory are yours, now and for ever.
Amen.**

SIGN OF PEACE

Jesus, you said to your apostles: "I leave you peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom where you live forever and ever. **Amen.**"

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
R. And with your spirit.

LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
grant us peace.

This is Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are we who are called to his supper.

**Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter
under my roof, but only say the word and
my soul shall be healed.**

COMMUNION

CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray:

Lord God,
You told us that the things that come out from within are what defile us. Help us to know what true purity of heart is through our love for others.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **R. Amen.**

