

23rd Ordinary Sunday
September 5, 2021
“Survival Today”

Is 35:4-7
Jas 2:1-5
Mk 7:31-37

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Not since the Civil War, 160 years ago, has our nation been so bitterly divided. Our politics are in disastrous disarray – Crime and violence in some cities seem impossible to curb – Half of Americans refuse to get vaccinated against the COVID Virus – Millions would rather live on entitlements than go to work – In some cities law enforcement is paralyzed – Our national debt exceeds our gross national product – Critical Race Theory is the rallying cry for those who insist we have made no progress overcoming racism – And the cell phone and internet have become the false idol that has replaced the Lord God Himself!

All the great kingdoms and empires of the world have been destroyed from within themselves. And, it would appear that America is on that same tragic path!

So, what are we to do? What can we do? How do we cope with the disaster that seems to lie ahead?

At the time of Isaiah, the kingdom of Israel was breaking down – and nearing tragedy, itself. There was no way that the Chosen People could escape the pain and the suffering that they would undergo. Their city would be destroyed – Their Temple reduced to rubble – And almost everyone exiled to a foreign land. Consequently, Isaiah promises a better future someday, for the faithful ones who were helpless and without hope.

God doesn't prevent the evil we perpetrate on one another – But God will, somehow, always be served by all that ever takes place, here, on earth. God will, ultimately, triumph. But that triumph will be manifested in all that He will do for those who have suffered unjustly. There will come a time when miracles take place – according to Isaiah. They will prove that God is still with the human race He created.

However, sometimes, the prophecies about God's plans and providence go far beyond what the prophet seemed to predict. For example, Israel was, eventually, restored to its homeland generations later – But then it began to degenerate – and continued to do so up until the time of Jesus.

Today, in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus shows that he is the divine champion promised by Isaiah. He opens the eyes and the ears of the blind and the deaf – He enables the mute to speak and the lame to walk. However, Jesus is much, much more than the cures and the healing he brings to the sick and to the disabled. He also brings justice and salvation to the world.

Consequently, today, Jesus cured the man – but away from the crowd! Furthermore, he ordered everyone to keep quiet about the cure. Healing our physical brokenness was not his mission – Neither was making life easier and exempt from all pain.

The mission of Jesus was to bring us to a life beyond this world. The mission of Jesus was to heal our broken hearts and wounded spirits. It was to bring us from the darkness of sin and eternal death into the light of God’s mercy, forgiveness, love, and everlasting life!

But his mission, here, was in no way a glorious one. It was met with resistance, refusal, rejection, hatred, unbelievable torture, crucifixion, and death! Moreover, the entire mission of Jesus would never end until human life was no more – and final judgment was passed.

Brothers and Sisters, our nation could be facing what Israel faced at the time of Isaiah – and, again, at the time of Jesus. We are disintegrating from within. If we self-destruct, we will all experience great hardship and pain – and it will be inescapable.

One of the deficiencies of some Evangelical faiths is that they want a Jesus without the cross. Some members even begin to doubt when they can’t be cured or when a loved one is prematurely taken from them! But our salvation is not from the suffering of this world. Our salvation enables us to live through the “terrors of the night” – and the “arrow (of evil) that flies by day”! Our salvation is in the mercy and love of God – continually brought to us by Jesus. This salvation enables us to remain steadfast and faithful no matter what befalls us – or the world around us.

So, let us praise God for His plans which always extend beyond the present moment – the present generation – and the present world. Let us be grateful for all that God continues to be for us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – And may we never waver in our discipleship – and commitment to Jesus!

Amen.

September 5, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra