

## **25TH SUNDAY, ORD. (B) THE WICKED AND THE JUST**

Are there wicked people in the world? Who are they and where are they? How did they become wicked, or why are they wicked? Yes there are many of them, and all over the world, even in the Church. How they became wicked may be due to many factors; it may be personal, or from the home he or she grew up, or due to the influence of the society in which he or she lives.

Are there righteous or just people? Yes there are many. Who are they and where are they? Like the wicked, they are also all over the world. They are just or righteous due to many factors. But the difference between the wicked and the righteous is that, the wicked do not want to hear or do anything good, but the just want to be good. Moreover, the just try hard to follow the commandments of the Lord, but the wicked do not. The wicked rely on their own wisdom, and live lives according to the principles of this world; but the just choose to follow the wisdom of God.

Today's readings draw our attention to the struggle that goes on between the wicked and the just. Even though each group is living its own life, the life of the just becomes inconvenient to the wicked. Because of that, the wicked is always plotting against the just. The upright are always persecuted.

St. James tells us some of the reasons why people turn to be wicked: "Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice". He continues to say that the wars and conflicts come from our passions. And so wicked intentions, selfishness, greed, and ambitious desires, lead to evil life. We heard of these ambitious desires in the gospel, as the twelve were arguing about who was the greatest.

St. James again tells us that to be just and have peace; one has to seek the wisdom from above which is pure, peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits. Jesus is also saying that to be great and righteous, one has to be like a child; one has to be the last and the servant of all. These qualities are absent in the lives of the wicked. They do not want to have any of them. They want to live their own way which suits them. They always want to be the first and not the last. There is no mercy in their minds, only vengeance and victimization as we heard in the first reading. There is self-love and self-centeredness.

Jesus tells us today that He is a victim of wickedness, but in every situation the wicked will be the loser. The just will always suffer and will appear to be the weaker side; they will face strife, jealousy, and suffering of all kinds, but with the help of God, they are the winner at the end of the struggle, or fight. In the same way true followers of Christ are victims of the plots of the wicked.

Those of us who have chosen to follow Jesus are called to a humble life of suffering and service. But it is difficult to live this gospel ideal in our selfish and materialistic culture. The craving to be popular or a superstar and wanting to be extraordinary in the eyes of the world has caused many Christians to drift away from the path of righteousness.

The second reading is a wake-up call to us to do away with jealousy and self-ambition even among us Christians. We may face opposition from other Christians if we take our Christian life seriously because our lives may be challenging to them, but that should not prevent us from persevering in our faith.

We are invited and encouraged today, to be like children and consider ourselves as slaves of all. We are to aspire to be upright in the midst of agnosticism and indifference towards religion and God. The desire of Christ is for us to follow Him to be just and righteous. He reminds that the glory is to be experienced at the end of suffering is greater than the present suffering from the hands of the wicked. We should not be deceived by the prosperity of the wicked, because it is temporal.

Here is some advice from the Psalmist: "Don't be worried on account of the wicked; don't be jealous of those who do wrong. They will soon disappear like grass that dries up; they will die like plants that wither. Trust in the Lord and do good; live in the land and be safe. Seek your happiness in the Lord, and He will give you your heart's desire" (Ps.37:1-4).