

## **22ND SUNDAY ORD. (B) BE DOERS OF THE WORD**

What does God gain when we obey His statutes and decrees? Does He lose or gain anything when we refuse to obey them? The answer to the questions is NO. He does not gain or lose. It is to our benefit. That was why Moses told the Israelites to observe them so that they might live and take possession of the land that God was giving them.

St. James also told the early believers that the Father willed to give birth to them by the word of truth that they might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. He continued to tell them to receive with meekness the word which is able to save their souls. They were to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving themselves.

The two passages make it clear the importance of the word of God which embodies His decrees and statutes. The word of God gives life and leads us to salvation. It gives wisdom and understanding to all who observe the law of God. But it should be received with humility and meekness.

The word of God is to be accepted in its entirety, and not to take what suits you and throw away what you do not want; or you do not add what you think should be added. This was what the scribes did, making six hundred and thirteen (613) by-laws out of the Ten Commandments. Part of it is what we heard in the gospel, when Jesus corrected the scribes about the washing of hands before meals.

When I hear the word of God, where do I keep it? I keep it in my heart and ponder or reflect on it and then act upon it. It is when I have kept it that I can do what it tells me. But if I have something already occupying my heart, then the word of God has no place in my heart to stay. Then I just hear it and let it pass away to the drains.

That is why Jesus chastised the scribes that they were honouring God with their lips but their hearts were far from Him. They had disregarded the

commandments of God and clung to human traditions. They replaced the law of the Lord with man-made traditions in their hearts, so the word has no place in their hearts.

Therefore, to be able to be the doer of the word, I have to empty myself of all the evil things and inordinate desires I have harboured in my heart. Jesus helps me to know some of the things which can occupy my heart and as a result fail to keep God's word and do it: "From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, pride, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile". If these are occupying my heart, how can I have the desire to listen and hear the word of God and live according to what it tells me? It is like filling a cup with sand, you cannot pour water into it. It has no room for anything else.

If we consider the parable of the sower, then even worldly anxieties and worries, tribulation or persecutions, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things can also be stumbling blocks to the word of God having a place in our hearts; (Mk.4:13-19). So I have to always ask myself whether I have interest in the word of God. If not, then, what makes it difficult for me to keep the commandments and obey them. Maybe I am always thinking about the dos and don'ts of the word, forgetting about its life-giving effect, or the salvation it will lead me to.

It is difficult to talk about sin because, the modern world adores and glorifies sin. Talking about sexual sin, greed, murder, theft, and envy, and their effects on our spiritual lives is useless these days. They have taken roots in our lives so there is no need to worry about them. Thus the commandments are meaningless, and they should be avoided. Can we think of some modern human traditions which we are clinging to at the expense of the commandments of God?

Today, Jesus asks me and you this question: "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, but not do what I command? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, listens to my words and acts on them. That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river bust against the house but could not shake

it because it has been well built. But the one who listens and does not act is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, it collapsed at once and it was completely destroyed,” (Lk.6:46-49).

God wants to give us life, wisdom and understanding; He wants to make us the first fruits of His creatures, and then save our souls. If we are ready to receive these gifts, then today if you hear His words, harden not your hearts.