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Sunday Mass Study Notes for Lectionary 84: 03-02-2025



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. This week we learn about the power of words to reveal a person's heart. We discover how as believers we can look to a future time when we will overcome death. Finally, we continue the study of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Saint Luke.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from the Apocryphal book of Sirach.

First Reading:

1 SIR 27:4-7

> *When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear;*
> *so do one's faults when one speaks.*
> *As the test of what the potter molds is in the furnace,*
> *so in tribulation is the test of the just.*
> *The fruit of a tree shows the care it has had;*
> *so too does one's speech disclose the bent of one's mind.*
> *Praise no one before he speaks,*
> *for it is then that people are tested.*

Today's reading profoundly reveals how a person's words reveal their heart. It closely parallels James' words in James Chapter 3. Words are very powerful, and the writer shows how one's words easily reveal our faults, so it is perhaps better to keep silent. Words are the fruit of a person which discloses the inner workings of the heart. My fifth-grade teacher, Mr. Dow, who has since gone away to heaven, had many sayings. I remember that he used to tell me, better to be silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt! His words and those in the first reading make good advice for us today.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading continues the study from the past several weeks in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. The context is the teaching on the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth to capture and reward His church. Paul said about this a few verses before today's reading, "*Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed*" (1Corin 15:51-52). When Jesus returns, those who are alive on the earth and who are believers in Him will not die but rather will be translated into heaven to rule and reign with Him forever (1 Thess 4:17). With these things in mind let's proceed with the reading.

Second Reading:

> *1 Corinthians 15:54-58 NAS95 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my*

> *beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.*

In the first verse of the reading Paul quoted from Isaiah 25:8 which reads, "*He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken*." The context of Isaiah was the restoration of Israel after their exile to Babylon as a result of their sin. Paul quoted the Septuagint version of Isaiah and applied it in an eschatological context. Paul looked forward to God's ultimate restoration of His people in glorified bodies like what Jesus displayed after His resurrection (1 John 3:2, "we shall be like Him"). Next, Paul quoted from Hosea 13:14, a passage in which God is chastising Israel for their sin and telling them that they will not be ransomed from physical death. Here, Paul used an Old Testament quotation to show the uselessness of trying to outrun the penalty of sin, because all sin leads to death (verse 56, Romans 6:23a, "for the wages of sin is death"). Israel had forsaken the Lord and was paying the price for it through exile and ultimately death. Thankfully, the reading does not end there, with an all-important "but God" idea in verse 57. "[B]*ut thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*." As believers in the Lord Jesus through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), we have achieved victory in an eternal sense the moment we believed. Through our faith, we can stand strong in the Lord, "steadfast, immovable" (v. 58a) while living with God's promise that our work for Him will be worthwhile (v. 58).

When I wrote this, I was dealing with the impending death of both my father and my father-in-law. Both men were professing believers in the Lord Jesus. Through their testimony, I have stood strong in my faith and know that after they passed, they will be forever with the Lord in heaven. All of the other believers in my family can look forward to the day when they will be reunited with these two godly men.

Living with these biblical truths greatly helps us as we age and watch as our family and friends pass away. The hope that we have in Jesus helps us to safeguard our hearts from the hopelessness experienced by people in this world who have no such hope.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel reading from Saint Luke is Jesus' continued teaching known as the Sermon on the Mount in which he addressed "a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon" (Luke 6:17).

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Gospel Reading:

> *Luke 6:39-45 NAS95 39 And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. 41 Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 42 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. 43 For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. 44 For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. 45 The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.*

Jesus taught His disciples and the crowds some important truths about the nature of His kingdom, a kingdom which was already there (Luke 17:21), and yet to come, as we saw in the second reading. First, the truths of the kingdom must be taught by teachers of the real truth (vv. 39 – 40). Jesus, Peter, and Paul were very clear about what was happening in their times about false teachings and about what would happen in the future. Jesus said, "*Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves*" (Matthew 7:15). Paul said, "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths*" (Timothy 4:3-4). Peter said, "*But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves* (2 Peter 2:1). Someone once said about the post-millennial spirit of our age, "the only truth that counts is true truth."

Second, believers are called to approach others (and God) with great humility by first examining themselves and getting right with God by repenting of their sins and seeking reconciliation with people whom they have offended (vv. 42-43). The good work of God is produced by a person with a humble heart, such a person is known for the good works that flow from their relationship with God (v. 44). As we saw in the first reading, a person is known by the words they speak (v.45).

It is perhaps easy to judge the false nature of a group of people called a "cult" whose teachings are so absolutely unbiblical that anyone inside the Christian church can easily understand their insidious

nature. However, when false teaching happens under the guise of the Christian church it can be much harder to recognize and deal with. When Jesus spoke His Sermon message, He was beset by the false teachings of the cult of the Pharisees. They taught that the way to reach God was through strict observance of the Law as they interpreted it, a religion of "do." Jesus came along and contradicted their false teachings with a different message, a message of "done." Jesus taught them that God had already secured their salvation, all that was necessary was for them to believe it. These contrasting messages, the false religion of "do" versus the true religion of "done," continue in modern times. Jesus secured eternal life for His believers, none of whom will be lost (John 18:9). Through our faith in Jesus Christ we can say, *"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Corinthians 15:57). When "blind guide" attempt to mislead us in the church, we can turn to the truths revealed about God's granting of eternal life to us through faith alone as a result of God's grace. For, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast*" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Reflection Questions

1. In the second reading we saw how Paul quoted from the Old Testament where God had poured out curses upon His people Israel for turning away from their covenant with him. However, Paul showed how the Gospel of Grace eclipsed this temporal punishment and pointed the way to an eternal kingdom with eternal life in a perfect human body. How does this contrast between the two covenants help you to understand the struggles you face in your own life? In what ways do you feel that God has in some way given you over to death? How does reflecting upon and growing in your faith in Jesus help you to understand how to achieve victory over these thoughts?

2. Doing the work of God is evidence of our salvation through faith in Christ Jesus as our works flow from our hearts that are changed by God Who also placed His Holy Spirit in us as a testimony to the truth. However, in what small ways have you perhaps bought into certain aspects of the false Gospel of "do" versus the true Gospel of "done" in which we feel that in some ways we have earned the right to eternal life? In what ways do enduring hardships point us more deeply to the work done by Jesus on the cross for us and oppose the false construct offered by the Pharisees who vainly worked to earn their salvation?

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