

The Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time August 7, 2022

The first sentence that Jesus speaks in today's gospel is very important. In some ways, it is a summary of the whole gospel message. Let's listen to it one more time:

"Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom"

God, the Father, is pleased to give us His Kingdom. What does that mean?

Imagine if a billionaire left you his whole estate - all his money, all his property, and his whole stock portfolio. Wouldn't you be ecstatic? Wouldn't it seem as though your life would never be the same?

Well, the Kingdom of God is our Heavenly Father's estate, and He has given it to us. All that the Father has is ours in Jesus Christ. At the Last Supper, Jesus assured His disciples, "Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason, I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you" (Jn 16:15). It belongs to Jesus by right because He is the Son of God. And He has given it all to those who will follow Him.

Now, when a billionaire divides up his estate, the more people he wills it to, the less there is for each person to receive. But that is not true for the Kingdom of God. It can never be depleted or used up, because it is an eternal kingdom. In fact, the more people who are in the Kingdom of God, the more there is to go around. Like a candle whose light grows when it is shared, so the Kingdom of God only increases with those who receive it.

What do we get when we receive the Kingdom of God? We receive all the treasures that God has prepared for those who love Him. We receive the Bible which has been handed down to us through the ages and gives us wisdom to live good and upright lives.

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We receive the Sacraments - Baptism, Penance, Eucharist, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Marriage, and Anointing of the Sick. Through the Sacraments, we encounter our Risen Lord who lifts us up, heals us, strengthens us, and empowers us to live as His disciples. We also receive membership in the Church which has preserved the teaching of Jesus down through the centuries and which guides us in living as His disciples. Most importantly, we receive the Holy Spirit who makes all these gifts come alive and bear fruit in our souls.

This Kingdom is ours through baptism which makes us sons and daughters of God and heirs to His estate. We should receive this good news with joy. It should change our lives forever.

Isn't it true, however, that most of us have only been drawing pennies from this great inheritance that we have received? We are like people dying of starvation while sitting in the middle of a banquet. What can we do to stop living like spiritual beggars and begin to experience the abundant riches that are ours through faith and baptism?

Jesus tells us how, "Sell your belongings and give alms." If you had an old car that could hardly run, and someone gave you a brand new one, wouldn't you be happy to give that old car to someone else? You would because you have received something so much better.

The same is true for our possessions. Once we have received the riches of faith, it is not so hard to part with material things that have limited use and give us only temporary pleasure. When we are generous with what we have, we discover that there is greater joy in giving than in receiving and possessing. We also become more aware of all the blessings that we have in abundance. Our gratitude for life increases because we realize that everything, we have is a gift of God and that He will never allow us to go without. This is the great lesson that the spiritual masters teach us. The more we give, the more we get in return.

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Today's second reading speaks to us about the faith of Abraham whose story we read about in the book of Genesis. He was an extremely wealthy man who owned extensive property. But, at an advanced age, he believed God's promise and left his homeland to receive something even greater. Though he did not know how he would receive it or even where it was, he went forward with faith. Even more incredibly, he believed God's promise that he would be a father and that his wife would be a mother even though they were already past their child bearing years. And because Abraham and Sarah believed, God brought forth a great nation from them - the people of Israel.

God is asking the same of us - to believe in His promise that He is always with us and that He will always provide for us. It means taking risks. Sometimes it might mean looking foolish. It could also mean that we lose friends along the way or that others will persecute us. But, if we truly believe, we will be able to overcome our fears and push ahead with faith in whatever it is that God may be asking of us. When we put our fate in God's hands and step out, even though we're not sure of what lies ahead, then God can do great things for us.

It has pleased God to give us the Kingdom. We are heirs to His great estate. We no longer have to fear. We no longer have to wonder what the future holds for us. Faith assures us that, whatever may happen, God will be with us and will make good come of it. If we step forward in faith, we will see great things and our lives will never be the same.