

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time - C

Note: Where a Scripture text is underlined in the body of this discussion, it is recommended that the reader look up and read that passage.

1st Reading - Isaiah 66:10-14c

The prophets of Israel were not merely men who predicted future events. They were the religious leaders and teachers of the Israelites. They themselves regarded their mission in this light. They wished, above all, to be “men of God,” and to bring God to their people and their people to God. The Hebrew word for prophet “*nabi*” bears out this interpretation; it means “speaker”: One who speaks God’s words. According to Deuteronomy 18:16, a prophet is one who is raised up to take the place of God as regards the people. In other places he is called the messenger, the servant, the interpreter of God, and also “one who stands in the counsel of God.”

Today we hear the words of the greatest of the Old Covenant prophets – Isaiah; greatness being determined by the length of his recorded works. In this reading Isaiah speaks of the final judgment and the purified and joyful Jerusalem. All children of God nurse at the breast of Jerusalem – an image that beautifully portrays universal peace, contentment, and love. Slowly the image changes and God takes the place of Jerusalem – fondling, comforting, and nursing His children.

¹⁰ Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her, all you who love her; Exult, exult with her, all you who were mourning over her! ¹¹ Oh, that you may suck fully of the milk of her comfort, That you may nurse with delight at her abundant breasts! ¹² For thus says the LORD: Lo, I will spread prosperity

In Hebrew, “*shalom*.”

over her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing torrent. As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms, and fondled in her lap;

See 1 Peter 2:2 for similar thought.

¹³ As a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you; in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort. ^{14abc} When you see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bodies flourish like the grass; The LORD’S power shall be known to his servants.

2nd Reading - Galatians 6:14-18

Judaizing preachers from Jerusalem had raised havoc in the various new Christian congregations which Paul had founded. For the most part these communities were

composed of converts from paganism. The Judaizers had succeeded in seducing many leading members of the Galatian community to submit to circumcision and other Jewish rites. These false teachers succeeded all the more easily because uncircumcised Christians were persecuted by Pagans and Jews alike, whereas the circumcised, being regarded as Jews, enjoyed comparative peace. Besides, they made the Galatian Christians believe that the observance of the Mosaic Law was something very pleasing to God. After all, who was Paul? He had not lived with Jesus, had not enjoyed the privilege of His teaching, but had taken up the preaching of the Gospel long after Jesus' death.

Paul responded in about A.D. 54 with his epistle to the Galatians. Today we hear the conclusion of this writing.

¹⁴ [M]ay I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The Judaizers boasted of their circumcision but Paul points out in verse 12 that the only reason to be circumcised is to avoid persecution. Instead of self-reliance, Saint Paul preaches dependence on the grace and favor of God and if it were not for the cross, Christianity would not exist.

through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Through the historic event of Calvary, the realization of the Father's plan of salvation for humanity came into being. The one perfect sacrifice has opened heaven and our sins can now be forgiven and forgotten. We are no longer slaves of God but are instead His sons and daughters.

¹⁵ For neither does circumcision mean anything,

This echoes the sentiment of Galatians 5:6 and 1 Corinthians 7:18-19.

nor does uncircumcision, but only a new creation.

Baptism washes away the old self and makes us a new creation.

“Paul also mentions a new creation in his letter to the Corinthians. . . . The strict meaning of ‘new creation’ is the transformation of all things which will occur after the resurrection from the dead. For then the creation will be freed from sin’s burden and redeemed. Paul demonstrates that saving baptism is an image of things to come. In it we put off the old nature and put on the new. And we, ridding ourselves of sin’s burden, receive the grace of the Spirit. Yet neither the most holy baptism nor the life to come recognizes any difference between circumcision and uncircumcision. By ‘world’ he means the affairs of life – honor, glory and wealth. To these he declares himself dead.” [Theodoret of Cyr (ca. A.D. 450), *Interpretation of the Fourteen Epistles of Paul, On Galatians 6:15*]

¹⁶ Peace and mercy be to all who follow this rule and to the Israel of God.

The Christian people of God are the new “offspring of Abraham.” As such we inherit what has been promised to them. See Romans 9:6-8.

¹⁷ From now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body.

The Greek “*stigmata*” did not mean what the word often means in English today. Paul had suffered so much from illness (Galatians 4:13; 2 Corinthians 12:7), floggings (2 Corinthians 11:25), beasts (1 Corinthians 15:32), and affliction (2 Corinthians 1:8) for Christ’s sake that he could speak of the evidence of such suffering as “brands” marking him forever as the “servant of Christ Jesus” (Galatians 1:10; Romans 1:1). In antiquity stigmata often designated the branding used to mark a slave or an animal as someone’s possession. Of such “marks” in the flesh Paul gladly boasts to those who try to glory in a different mark in the flesh (circumcision).

“Anyone who after Christ’s coming is circumcised in the flesh does not carry the marks of the Lord Jesus. Rather, he glories in his own confusion. But the one who was flogged beyond what the law required, frequently was in prison, was beaten three times with rods, was once stoned and suffered all the other things that are written in his catalog of boasting (2 Corinthians 11:23-29) – this is the one who carries on his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps also the ascetic today who keeps his body under control and subjects it to servitude so that he will not appear reprobate as he preaches to others may in some way carry the marks of the Lord Jesus on his own body.” [Saint Jerome (A.D. 386), *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Galatians* 3,6,17]

¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers [and sisters]. Amen.

Gospel - Luke 10:1-12,17-20

Last week we heard of the cost of discipleship and how one must constantly keep their eye on the goal and not look back. Today we hear of the mission of the 72.

{Hearing the gospel today is like sitting in on a very important business meeting. It seems we are listening to a sales manager giving orders to his staff as they get ready to set out on a new sales campaign. Actually, it is Jesus preparing His staff of seventy-two for their first great missionary journey – a kind of sales job. His instructions, practical and specific, would be a good program for any endeavor:

1. Stay focused on the project at hand; allow no distractions.
2. Remember, you do not work alone; God is with you.
3. Pray and trust in God’s help.
4. Stay alert at all times. Pay attention.
5. Value your product, because it is important.
6. Carefully discern when it is time to speak, time to be still.

7. If people are closed to you, you are wasting your time; move on.
8. Even then, leave a seed behind to take root and bear fruit later.
9. Remember, Christ will do the follow-up work; you prepare the way.
10. Pray for more workers; that's an essential part of the plan.

Good sales manager that He is, Jesus also provides His workers with some information about the competition. There will be "snakes and scorpions," he warns them, using imaginative language to picture the obstacles they will have to overcome. Because He has prepared them so well, however, they have nothing to fear from any competitor. His sales crew is ready for the challenge.

In one way or another, aren't we all members of Jesus' sales crew? Haven't we all been commissioned to "sell" the Good News to others? By word and example, by attitudes and behavior, aren't we continually telling the world about our "product"? Let's look again at Jesus' instructions; they might be exactly what we need to be successful at home, in volunteer work, in our parish, and at our jobs. It's worth a try. (taken from *Bible & Liturgy Sunday Bulletin*, The Liturgical Press, 1995)

^{10:1} After this the Lord appointed seventy (-two) others

In addition to the twelve. Trustworthy ancient manuscripts support either seventy or seventy-two. The Old Testament text behind the number seems to be Genesis 10:2-31, the table of the nations of the world: the Masoretic text of which reads seventy while the Septuagint has seventy-two. In any case, Luke roots the universal mission of his church in the ministry of Jesus.

whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit.

Three reasons are involved in sending them forth in pairs: (1) mutual support; (2) bearing witness to the truth of their testimony (Deuteronomy 19:15); (3) living embodiment of the gospel of peace (see verses 5 & 6). The most famous pair in the history of the Church were Paul and Barnabas.

² He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.

The same saying occurs in Matthew 9:37-38 just before the call of the twelve.

³ Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves.

The image shifts from reapers to animals. The missionaries may be defenseless before hostile people, but the Christian mission inaugurates a new era of peace and reconciliation in which the lamb will lie down with the wolf (see Isaiah 11:6; 65:25).

⁴ Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals;

See [Luke 9:3](#) where the apostles are given similar instructions.

and greet no one along the way.

This suggests the urgency of the situation that will face the disciples: not even ordinary greetings should deter them (see [2 Kings 4:29](#)).

⁵ Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.'

This is the peace that the Lucan gospel associates with the salvation being brought by Christ.

**⁶ If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.
⁷ Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment.**

This saying is quoted in 1 Timothy 5:18 as "scripture" but I can find it nowhere in the Old Testament.

Do not move about from one house to another.

Be satisfied with what is offered – do not shop around.

⁸ Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you,

Dietary laws have no force anymore (see 1 Corinthians 10:27; Acts 10:25).

⁹ cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand for you.'

It was brought near in the coming of Jesus and is brought even nearer as the missionaries preach and cure the sick and thus extend His activity.

**¹⁰ Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, ¹¹
'The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you.'**

A gesture of repudiation – the town isn't even worth carrying dust from it.

Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand. ¹² I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town.

See Genesis 19. Sodom didn't have the opportunity for repentance that is being offered to these towns.

¹⁷ The seventy (-two) returned rejoicing, and said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name."

Recall Jesus' power over the demons in Galilee (Luke 8:26-39) and the power Jesus gave the twelve in Luke 9:1-2. The seventy-two disciples share this same authority.

¹⁸ Jesus said, "I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky.

Satan is found at times in the Old Testament in the throne room of Yahweh arguing like a prosecuting attorney against the true welfare of God's people (Job 2:1ff; Zechariah 3:1ff). The fall of Satan (see Isaiah 14:12) is a symbolic way of telling the disciples of the effect of their mission.

¹⁹ Behold, I have given you the power

The gift has permanent value as the powers of evil are continually attacked and overcome.

'to tread upon serpents' and scorpions

Not only well-known sources of physical evil, but Old Testament symbols of all kinds of evil.

and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you.

In Acts Luke frequently narrates how the Lord Jesus rescued His missionaries from the forces of destruction (Acts 28:1-6).

²⁰ Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Look to the real reward and avoid overemphasizing the external wonders (1 Corinthians 12).