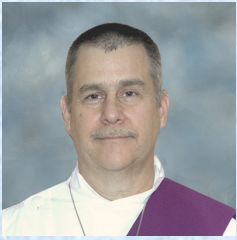


Homily Rerun: October 30, 2016 ~ Deacon Bruce



It can be easy to feel insignificant while gazing up at a starry night sky or looking at nature in all its beauty. We could get the feeling that we don't count for much. Yet the author of Wisdom marvels at how much God loves each speck of creation and every human being. God's love is proven by the infinite patience God shows in guiding and correcting us. Gentle nudges as warnings and instructions whispered into our hearts, guide us back to the path when we stray. God even sends us the experiences we need to grow spiritually.

Wisdom speaks of God's mercy, **"You have mercy on all, because You can do all things; and overlook people's sins so that they can repent. For You love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made."** Wisdom 11:23-24

Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger, abounding in mercy." Psalm 103:8

"The LORD, the LORD, a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in love and fidelity." Exodus 34:6

"The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in kindness, forgiving iniquity and rebellion; yet certainly not declaring the guilty guiltless." Numbers 14:18

God told St. Faustina about His mercy. **"I desire the confidence of my people. Let not even the weak and very sinful fear to approach me, even if their sins be as numerous as all the sand of the earth, all will be forgiven in the fathomless pit of my mercy."** (*Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul*)

This is what Jesus said to St. Faustina about the Sacrament of Reconciliation, **"There the greatest miracles take place and are incessantly repeated . . . The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full. When you go to confession, know this, that I myself am waiting for you in the confessional; I am only hidden by the priest, but I myself act in your soul. Here the misery of the soul meets the God of Mercy. Tell souls that from this fount of mercy, souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great, there is no limit to my generosity,"** (*Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul*)

In today's Gospel, Jesus goes out of His way to look up in a tree to find Zacchaeus. Why would He do that? **I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents."** Luke 15:10

"The Son of Man has come to seek out and save what was lost" Luke 19:10

If you really encounter Jesus you will be different. You will be changed. From scripture we can see how people were changed when they had encountered Jesus: There is a pattern of leaving things behind.

"The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, 'Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Messiah?'" (John 4:28-29)

The Magi: **"They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."** (Matthew 2:11)

The Apostles: **"Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him."** (Mark 1:20)

"After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him, 'Follow me.' And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him." (Luke 5:27-28)

Zacchaeus was ready to leave his wealth, **"Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over."** (Luke 19:9)

In today's Gospel, when Jesus decides to befriend Zacchaeus it amazed onlookers because they considered Zacchaeus to be a public sinner and certainly unworthy of being called by Jesus. Zacchaeus was definitely judged harshly by his fellow Jews. Scripture does not tell us if he actually was corrupt or not. No one would have expected Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, a very wealthy and prominent man in Jericho to be up a Sycamore tree. Certainly no one would have wanted to help him by making way for him so he could get to the front to see Jesus. Zacchaeus felt he had no other option if he wanted to see Jesus, so he swallowed his pride and climbed a tree. To see Jesus clearly maybe we too may have to get away from the crowd and risk being different, risk losing our dignity. The word "holy" in Greek actually means someone who is different, someone set apart.

Do we make any effort to encounter Jesus even in the least possible way? Do we make an effort "climb a tree" to see Jesus?

Zacchaeus had to overcome the obstacle of his short stature in order to see Jesus. What are some of the obstacles in our lives that might prevent us from encountering Jesus?

With Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus, one of the things we should notice, is that the initiative comes from Jesus. God always makes the first move. **"Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house."** Jesus says similar words to us! He makes this invitation at Communion.

Zacchaeus **"came down quickly and received him with joy."** Are we ready to received Jesus with joy?