

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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**THIRTEENTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

28th June 2026

Matt. 10:37 Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸ and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Matt. 10:40 “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴² and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

These verses conclude Jesus’ words to the apostles about their mission. He informs them again about the difficulties that will lie ahead but in the midst of persecution and rejection they will know that the Lord is with them. This is why Jesus said that nothing else, no other loyalty or affection, should have a greater claim on us than our decision to follow Jesus. The paradox of the gospel is clearly presented: we will truly live only if we die to ourselves. Jesus goes on to say that whoever receives one of his followers because of their allegiance to him will be rewarded. This is true no matter what the status of the followers, one of the elders, or one of the ‘little ones’. The staggering point made here by Jesus is reflected in the theme of the first reading. When we care for the one in need we care for the Lord himself.

SEAN GOAN - Let the Reader Understand

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus never wanted suffering for anyone but he knew that if anyone was going to follow in his footsteps promoting love and respect for every person, they would meet with opposition. Fidelity has its price, but also rewards. Would you agree?
2. The passage is a call to both radical and practical discipleship. When have you found that in order to achieve a certain objective you had to make it a priority, and then take the practical steps necessary to reach your goal? What were the benefits to you when you did this?
3. ‘Hate’ is prophetic exaggeration for the uncompromising loyalty Jesus seeks in disciples. There may be times when people make demands in conflict with fidelity to another relationship. This can be painful. When have you found that being clear about your priorities helped you in that situation?

JOHN BYRNE OSA - Intercom

Jesus did not want to see anyone suffer. Suffering is bad. Jesus never sought it, either for himself or for anyone else. On the contrary, all his life he fought against the suffering and evil that has harmed people so much.

The Gospels show him always fighting the suffering that lies behind sickness, injustice loneliness, despair or sinfulness. Jesus lived as a man committed to eliminating suffering, ending injustice and infusing strength in people so they could live.

But seeking the good and happiness of all brings with it many problems. Jesus knew this from experience. It is not possible to be with those who suffer and to seek the good of the most vulnerable without provoking the reaction of those who have no interest in any change. It is impossible to be with the crucified without one day being crucified oneself.

To carry the cross is not to seek ‘crosses’ but to accept crucifixion that will befall us if we following the footsteps of Jesus. Nothing could be clearer.

JOSÉ A PAGOLA - Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus

GENERAL COMMENTS

in our Catholic tradition we always read the bible “historically” – with the awareness that each book, indeed each passage, was composed in a certain historical context and is also to be read in a historical context.

Applying this principle to today’s passage, we read it not as a list of commands (far less of threats) but as a “story” – this is what Jesus said when he sent his disciples into their world. It is a living story so that in our meditation we ask the question, who is the Jesus who said (is saying) these things – to us?

Verses 37 to 39 speak of the demands Jesus makes on people and wishes his followers to make on their contemporaries. We remember with gratitude the people who have made such demands on us, lifting us out of mediocrity and giving us something for which we are willing to risk everything we hold dear.

Follow in my footsteps” in verse 38 shows that Jesus only imposes on others what he has imposed on himself.

Verses 37 and 38 can give the impression of Jesus’ followers as a surly lot, suffering from “victim syndrome”; verse 39 corrects such wrong interpretations – the overall effect of the following of Jesus is positive, it calls for self-sacrifice as a way to fuller life.

The verse presents two sharply contrasting possibilities; we stay with each one in turn, getting a feeling for both and letting them play off each other like contrasting colours in a painting.

– On the one hand, there is complacency – “I can relax now that I have found what I was looking for”. We feel Jesus’ sadness at mediocrity where there was immense potential.

– On the other hand we feel his exhilaration at people who have taken risks (lost life) and discovered new vitality (found life).

Verses 40 to 42 In accord with the original context of the passage, we focus on ourselves sent into the world by Jesus with our different vocations – as parents, teachers, community leaders, Church ministers etc.

In our preaching we tend to stress that God is “offended” by our sins. The God whom Jesus reveals in verse 42 is not concerned about himself. Like a good parent, teacher or church minister, his concern is for the “little ones” he has formed and sent into the world. He fusses over them (note “certainly”) and rewards generously anyone who looks after them. We think of parents who declare themselves “eternally grateful” to a teacher for befriending their children.

The designation “little ones” is very significant. Jesus does not want his missionaries to be overly concerned at being treated with honour or respect. In his eyes, they are (and must see themselves as) “little ones”. As many have noted, one of the root causes of many of the recent clerical scandals is that we church leaders have encouraged the culture of elitism, forgetting that we were sent by the Lord as “little ones” grateful for “as much as a cup of cold water”.

We think too of the church’s call to be a humble presence (a little one) in non-Western or non-Christian cultures.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL - Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The first part of our Gospel for this Sunday may cause surprise and possibly unease. Even taking account of robust Semitic language, the message is stark: faith above family, or more gently, the family of the faith above our natural family. The Hebrew Bible would never set up such a chasm between faith and family! Hence it is no surprise that the first reading corresponds with the second part of the Gospel about how to receive a prophet.

Thought for the day

We do have the saying, “goodness is its own reward” and that, no doubt, is true. We don’t do good to be rewarded but simply because it is good. At the same time, goodness leads to goodness and kindness inspires kindness. This can be true at the most mundane level: if I am courteous and obliging, say, as a driver, perhaps others on the road will be inspired to be obliging and courteous in their turn. It is even more true at a higher level. Generosity of spirit inspires the same in others.

Prayer

Help us, Lord, to be kind and generous in our dealings with others today following the example of Jesus. Amen.

KIERAN O’MAHONY OSA - www.tarsus.ie

Jesus is preparing the disciples and tells them in bleak terms about the cost of discipleship: a life of self-denial, of ‘taking up the cross’. But the final part of his instruction is about the virtues of hospitality and compassion. Small acts of kindness have a significance beyond what we expect: ‘Whoever welcome you, welcomes me’, says Jesus. The disciples will participate fully in his mission, and those who welcome them are all playing their part in building up God’s vision for the world. When we reach out in a spirit of welcome and solidarity, the light of Christ is shining.

Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civil and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also ‘macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones.’ (Pope Francis, Laudato Si, 231)

Can you recall a time when a small gesture meant the world to you. Resolve to carry out at least one act of random kindness this week: give an unexpected compliment, pay for a drink for the person behind you in line, give someone your seat on public transport, help someone who looks lost,

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT - Go Deeper