

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle C
13-14 November 2010

“Good news or bad news?”

Imagine that tomorrow as you get your mail, you open one of the envelopes to find that you won a free vacation. Now when I say free it really is free...no strings attached. Wouldn't you be excited? I bet you are packing your bags in your head already. You continue to read the letter where it states the specifics of this free get-away. You will fly out of BWI and land in Florida. There you will be picked up by a driver and taken about 25 miles to a camp Site. There you will spend two weeks in nature, hiking, swimming and sleeping under the stars. Now let me ask you...Is this good news or bad news?

Some of us might be thrilled with this idea...no schedules, no cell phones...just you and nature. Some might find this awesome as its adventurous and quite a change from your humdrum life at school or work. Yet I bet there are others that heard the word “camping” and thought...NO WAY. Maybe you often go camping with your kids and so another camping trip would be no vacation. You might rather a nice beach villa. Maybe some of us are so burdened with our lives that we don't want to rough it if but we want to be pampered and waited on.

Depending on who we are, the lives we lead and the experiences we have...that's what determines whether this letter is good news or bad news. In a similar way, is today's gospel understood. To some its good news and to others its not. Luke's gospel provides us with some very stark words. Jesus speaks of the hardships and trials that exist as a result of being His follower. Being hated, handed over by family and friends...perhaps even death...these are all mentioned in the gospel we just heard. Yet these words are not a threat but rather a promise. Jesus says, all these things will happen but...do not be afraid because in the end, my followers will be with Me. So...good news or bad news?

Well certainly this is good news for those of us who do our best to follow Jesus. Yet perhaps this is not such good news for those who do not. Because Jesus says, in the end, those who do evil will not prevail. However, before you and I breath a sigh of relief that we are safe because we are Catholic and we are the good ones since we are at mass, I think the gospel is inviting us to do some self reflection.

Is Luke's gospel indeed good news for us? If Jesus returned today to this world...would it be good news for us? Would Jesus find us loving each other, not even in the greater area of Baltimore but even just in our community? Or would Jesus indeed find pettiness and factions among us. Perhaps some people not talking to others or ignoring others? Would Jesus find us accepting of all people or would we as family and friends be found putting others on trial...judging other religions, political parties or ethnicities. We are family to all people as God is our Father is He not? And I don't mean we can't use our intelligence to deem something right or wrong but do we judge others who differ from us to the point where we demonize them and view them as bad? Would Jesus find all people alive in spirit or are we responsible for the killing of people's spirits by our closed-mindedness?

And yet right now we can easily sit back and say...well look around...everything

seems fine...all is well. Yet our first reading from Malachi reminds us that it will not be until the end that justice will prevail. Malachi's words of encouragement are directed to a people distraught because those who were not living holy lives seemed to be unharmed.

So, since none of us are fully perfect, is it time to simply await our punishment? Thankfully no. Instead this inner reflection is just what the Church asks us to do as we end our liturgical year. Assess where we are as believers. What have we done and what have we not? Based on that, we need to change...not tomorrow but today. Today is for sure, tomorrow is not.

The stakes are far greater than a vacation that we did not want. Instead, our choices here on earth will determine our life afterwards. So may take these words of Luke not as a threat but rather as a promise. Take these words into our schools, workplace and home as we make decisions every day. Good news or bad news in today's gospel? That remains for us to determine.