

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers, Ordinary Time 9, Year A²

Lectionary-based Catechesis • Year A

Proper 4

(Sunday 29 May to 4 June, if after Trinity Sunday)

Principal Service readings

Deuteronomy 11.18-21, 26-28	Challenge in choosing to follow the Lord
Psalms 31.[1-5] 19-24	You have heard my plea for help
Romans 1.16-17; 3.22b-28 [29-31]	Faith not works
Matthew 7.21-29	False and true disciples; the wise and the foolish

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Warnings of judgement

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?” ²³Then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.”

²⁴Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. ²⁶And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell – and great was its fall! ²⁸Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, ²⁹for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Matthew 7.21-29 NRSV¹

CPL • LBC Year A Proper 04.odt • 2020-05-26

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999,*

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

This passage forms the end of the Sermon on the Mount, which began at the start of chapter 5. It contains warnings. In the first example Jesus gives, he is addressed as 'Lord'. People can know who he is, even respect him, but knowledge and even a statement of faith are not enough for salvation – actions are required too. The people that Jesus refers to who call him 'Lord, Lord' have been active in the church, prophesying and working miracles – religious and impressive things. But these are not necessarily the actions that are required by God. These people have hijacked religion, but they are not actually known by the Lord himself: 'I shall tell them to their faces: I have never known you.'

It is a very arresting section to read. It turns our idea of what is religious – and who is religious – on its head. Such people are acting on behalf of God, even impressing people with their religious credentials, and yet they are so far from God that he don't truly know him.

'The person who does the will of my Father in heaven' (Matthew 7.21) is surely the one who is like Jesus, the one who does the father's will *par excellence*. This is a life lived in faithful service, in actually doing the Father's will, not just talking about it. We can ask ourselves whether our faith is focused on ourselves or whether it is focused on God himself and seeking his will.

The illustration Jesus gives of the house falling down shows us that we cannot tell by appearances. The house built on sand looked as good as the house built on rock. In terms of a church, it could be a church full of people, of activities, with a good cash flow, and strong leadership. But such a church could also be self-satisfied, complacent, and uncaring of the needs of the world. If, as in Paul's words the gospel is 'the power of God for salvation', then it should matter that there are people who don't know this, and so we can do something about it – the gospel in action.

Quotations

1

<text> "The soul, in its loneliness, hopes only for "salvation." And yet what is the burden of the Bible if not a sense of the mutuality of influence, rising out of an essential unity, among soul and body and

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community and world? These are all the works of God, and it is therefore the work of virtue to make or restore harmony among them. The world is certainly thought of as a place of spiritual trial, but it is also the confluence of soul and body, word and flesh, where thoughts must become deeds, where goodness must be enacted. This is the great meeting place, the narrow passage where spirit and flesh, word and world, pass into each other. The Bible's aim, as I read it, is not the freeing of the spirit from the world. It is the handbook of their interaction. It says that they cannot be divided; that their mutuality, their unity, is inescapable; that they are not reconciled in division, but in harmony. What else can be meant by the resurrection of the body? The body should be 'filled with light', perfected in understanding. And so everywhere there is the sense of consequence, fear and desire, grief and joy. What is desirable is repeatedly defined in the tensions of the sense of consequence.

The art of the commonplace: the agrarian essays / Wendell Berry. 2002

2

Is it not wonderful news to believe that salvation lies outside ourselves?

Martin Luther, 1483–1546

Related topics

For further study:

Living the mortal life; morality; justice; paschal mystery; Sermon on the Mount; conversion; faith/works; discipleship; reign of God

Closing Prayer

God of justice,
rock of our salvation,
open our minds and hearts to Jesus your Son.

Let us hold fast to his words
and express them in deeds,
that our faith may be built on a sure foundation
and our lives be judged worthy of you.

3