

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – July 25, 2010 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Genesis 18:20-32

In those days, the LORD said: "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave, that I must go down and see whether or not their actions fully correspond to the cry against them that comes to me. I mean to find out." While Abraham's visitors walked on farther toward Sodom, the LORD remained standing before Abraham. Then Abraham drew nearer and said: "Will you sweep away the innocent with the guilty? Suppose there were fifty innocent people in the city; would you wipe out the place, rather than spare it for the sake of the fifty innocent people within it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to make the innocent die with the guilty so that the innocent and the guilty would be treated alike! Should not the judge of all the world act with justice?"

The LORD replied, "If I find fifty innocent people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake." Abraham spoke up again: "See how I am presuming to speak to my Lord, though I am but dust and ashes! What if there are five less than fifty innocent people? Will you destroy the whole city because of those five?" He answered, "I will not destroy it, if I find forty-five there." But Abraham persisted, saying, "What if only forty are found there?" He replied, "I will forbear doing it for the sake of the forty." Then Abraham said, "Let not my Lord grow impatient if I go on. What if only thirty are found there?" He replied, "I will forbear doing it if I can find but thirty there." Still Abraham went on, "Since I have thus dared to speak to my Lord, what if there are no more than twenty?" The LORD answered, "I will not destroy it, for the sake of the twenty." But he still persisted: "Please, let not my Lord grow angry if I speak up this last time. What if there are at least ten there?" He replied, "For the sake of those ten, I will not destroy it."

Psalm: Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 6-7, 7-8

R. Lord, on the day I called for help, you answered me.

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,
for you have heard the words of my mouth;
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;
I will worship at your holy temple
and give thanks to your name.

Because of your kindness and your truth;
for you have made great above all things
your name and your promise.

When I called you answered me;
you built up strength within me.

The LORD is exalted, yet the lowly he sees,
and the proud he knows from afar.
Though I walk amid distress, you preserve me;
against the anger of my enemies you raise your hand.

Your right hand saves me.

The LORD will complete what he has done for me;
your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;
forsake not the work of your hands.

Scripture Reading: Colossians 2:12-14

Brothers and sisters: You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And even when you were dead in transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he brought you to life along with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions; obliterating the bond against us, with its legal claims, which was opposed to us, he also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross.

Gospel: Luke 11:1-13

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, and do not subject us to the final test." And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,' and he says in reply from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.' I tell you, if he does not get up to give the visitor the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence. "And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

When you want something to happen, do you pray to God for it? A lot of us “whisper little prayers.” Others put aside time each day. A number use this web site to pray about and understand the readings for the coming Sunday. Of course, there are those who do not believe in prayer at all in our secular culture of the USA, so, when their friend is having an operation or is traveling or something they say, “We will be thinking of you,” instead of “We will be praying for you.” But others go all out. When Pope John Paul came to St. Louis a number of years ago, a group of cloistered sisters called “the Pink Nuns” prayed many months for sunny clear days during his visit. Guess what happened. Sunny clear days the entire time. Then, the minute his plane lifted off to take him back, I watched the clouds gather and the rain began to fall. Persistent prayer. Sunday’s readings teach us this. Be obstinate.

Abraham in the [First Reading](#) is an example. Abraham’s visitors from last week went on their way to the city called Sodom, and God went with Abraham. God tells about his intention to destroy Sodom and its surrounding cities because of the debauchery there. Against all reason and expectation, Abraham begins negotiating with God, right out loud. Will you sweep away the innocent with the guilty? Suppose there were fifty innocent people in the city; would you wipe out the place rather than spare it for the sake of the fifty innocent people within it? . . . Should not the judge of all the world act with justice? God agrees that he will not destroy the city if fifty innocent people can be found. Abraham slyly asks for more. Would God agree to spare the city even if only forty-five innocent people were found? God agrees. What about forty? Ok, God says. Abraham goes on and on until he negotiates down to the number ten. God replies, “For the sake of those ten, I will not destroy it.” Abraham stops there. As you may know, it turned out that not even ten innocents lived in the town, so Sodom got destroyed. But notice, God had granted each of Abraham’s prayers.

Jesus recommends the same kind of shrewdness. In the [Gospel](#) he tells the famous parable about knocking on the door of a friend late at night to borrow some bread. The friend refuses because he and his family are all in bed. Jesus says, “If he does not get up to give the visitor the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence.” Fine, but why do we have to be persistent and pray to God for the same thing over and over? Why haggle? Because of love. God is like a good human father who loves his child very much. He does not always give his child everything the child wheedles for, however. Sometimes he needs to teach him or her who is in charge of things: the parent not the child. Definitely he gives us in some form what we ask for, but often he wants us to be persistent in asking so we will learn humility and acceptance. And when we suffer, he sits beside our bed and suffers with us. Keep knocking and it will be opened to you.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. What do you learn about Abraham in the story? What behavior of his would you like to imitate? What is each one, God and Abraham, willing to do because of their covenant?
2. Christ took us as partners when he “obliterated the bond against us.” He tore down the wall so God could establish a new covenant with us. What does this covenant mean to you? Does it affect your prayers when you are asking God for something?
3. Do you get the impression that you will really have to do some fast talking or that God is just waiting for you to ask so he can give you what you need? Jesus refers to the Father giving the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit know about your needs?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

God our Father and protector, without you nothing is holy, nothing has value. Guide us to everlasting life by helping us to use wisely the blessings you have given to the world. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen