

YEAR A - THE YEAR OF MATTHEW

THE HOLY GOSPEL

PENTECOST 3 JULY 3, 2011



The Holy Gospel is according to St. Matthew the Eleventh Chapter beginning at the sixteenth verse.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus spoke to the crowd saying:

16 "To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, **17** 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.' **18** For John came neither eating nor

drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; **19** the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." **25** At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; **26** yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. **27** All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. **28** "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon - July 3, 2011

Year A - The Year of Matthew - Pentecost 3

Zechariah 9:9-12; Psalm 145:8-14; Romans 7:15-25a; Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Nobody has ever had to write a book on how to think negatively. Nobody has ever said that the secret to happiness is the power of negative thinking. No one has to teach us negative thinking because our nature naturally tends towards it. Sin always favors darkness. Therefore, it is often the path of least resistance for us.

The problem with atheism is that it does not understand human nature. An atheist will say that all we have to do is rid ourselves of silly superstitions such as Christ, and replace it all with clear, concise scientific thought, and the world will be fine. They neglect to notice that the Nazis and Communists saw their views as being free of Christianity and based on clear scientific thought. The result was not a good one.

Atheism does not understand human nature. However, our faith does. Our faith even knows that religion and the best aspects of human society will be perverted. Our faith knows this because it knows of sin. Sin is what is in human nature. Sin breaks the rela-

tionship of all things. Such a thing is what is talked about in Paul's letter to the Romans.

Paul's letter to the Romans is actually about the ultimate hope of all believers. Paul's letter to the Romans is considered his Magnus Opus. What Magnus Opus means is "Greatest Work." In other words, it is not so much as a letter as a summation of what he taught and believed during his ministry.

In this epistle, Paul is writing Rome because he has long had a dream of going there to visit the great church that was in the seat of the whole Roman Empire. It was a great church in a great city.

Nobody really knows who founded the Roman church. We know that there were people from Rome at the day of Pentecost. In addition, there were early persecutions of the church and that forced Priscilla and Aquila from the city to Greece where they became helpers of Paul.

As Paul writes this great church, he wants to set the ground for his eventual visit to the city. His coming to Rome is a goal of his ministry not because he is going to establish a church, but because he seems to want to pay his respects to this admirable and devoted congregation of believers.

Now, when you heard the epistle to the Romans for today, it maybe sounded a little confusing. Part of that is just the style of Paul's writing. However, the reading today is also dealing with a complicated, confusing but very important issue. This is an issue common to all of us. It is the character of what human nature is and the impact of sin upon it.

Paul writes, "The good I want to do, I fail to do. However, the bad things I do not want to do, is what I end up doing." We know what that is. We live with that every day.

A pastor and his wife liked to eat just a little bit too much, and it showed. He said, "I know what a diet is. I also know how it works when I am on a diet. When I am on a diet, I notice that the food I should not eat (the cakes, chips, and pizza) is what I eat and crave the most. Moreover, the food I should eat (the carrots, lettuce, and broccoli) is what I fail to eat.

St. Paul's comments are shown forth. "The good I want to do, I fail to do. The bad things I do not want to do, is what I end up doing." It is almost as if human nature is such that we do the opposite of our good intentions. Our lives are complicated often times because we make them that way by the conflicting desires within us. That is what sin is.

The nature of sin is that it turns towards darkness even the noblest aspects of our lives and human culture. Sin corrupts the best of humanity. People, institutions, and even ideas can all be corrupted. However, Paul also tells us in the letter to the Romans that we are not to become resigned to sin. We know it is there, and we know it is active, but we do not simply throw up our hands in defeat. Be it sin in the corporate world with shady and unethical practices or sin in our personal lives, we are to strive against it.

St. Paul tells us that we have something that an atheist does not have. We believe in the cross of Christ that frees us from our sin. We believe in the forgiveness of Christ to comfort us and wage war against the sins of our lives.

Sin is a daily struggle. We do not believe that if we simply get the right person, life style, law, or institution in place the world will be utopia. We do not believe this because we

know there will never be a heaven on earth. Sin will prevent that. Perfection will only exist in the kingdom of God. Therefore, people, life styles, governments, and laws as well as conscience, ethical conduct and confession are all used to stand against sin and to try to live a life that respects other people and our God. History shows that when God is not respected neither are people. When God is not valued, brutality is the result.

In Jesus' day, Pharisees thought that they respected God, but what they really cherished was their own pride and power. Jesus shows us that we cannot see ourselves as superior to others because we are all tainted by sin and none of us can save ourselves from it. Only Jesus and his cross can save us, and we as his children humbly confess to him our sins.

It is that humility before God and the salvation of our Lord that is our hope. Sin is powerful, but Christ defeated sin, death, and the devil. Although all of us are tainted by sin's power, we have been baptized into Christ and therefore into his salvation.

In today's Gospel, Jesus says, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest." Christ is our rest. He is our hope. He is our comfort. He is the victor over the sin we commit in thought, word, and deed. Amen.