

“So they went off and preached repentance”

GOD’S PLAN

Does it strike you as it does me as strange that Jesus sends his core disciples out from him so unprepared and so dependent upon the communities they encountered? They were not given detailed instructions on what to say or do; they were seemingly left to do as they saw Jesus do while they were in his presence. Just go out 2x2 with no entourage no beasts of burden, nothing extra. They were ordered to keep it as simple as Jesus himself is. Jesus started off his mission to the people by making the declaration to repent and believe in the Gospel; ie. to repent meaning to change our thoughts and behavior to become what God’s plan is for us; to believe in Him and what he does as God-with-us.

That surprised many of his hearers because they thought they knew what God wanted of them. They came from a tradition where the Law of God was being implemented and they knew the one true God. Yet they were compelled to listen to Jesus because of the works he did in curing illnesses and transforming lives by healing their souls from the effects of the demons they were harboring within. Demonstrating his authority over the unclean spirits that invaded and corrupted souls, Jesus was giving his hearers a glimpse of what God had in store for them - they were to become sons and daughters of God.

Thus in sending out his disciples with the same exhortation of repentance and the same authority over unclean spirits, and the same dependence upon the

people they were sent out to, they would themselves become Jesus in that community. And being Jesus in the community, they would do the same curing of bodily illnesses and healing of souls that Jesus did. And to what end? To form a community which is prepared to meet God face to face. To be prepared means “that we should be holy and blameless before God” as St. Paul says in his letter today. To be holy and blameless means that we have to be perfect so to most of us it seems foolish to think that thus we can meet God face to face. We can’t be perfect so perhaps we should settle for a lesser goal that we can accomplish and just try to be a good person as we understand that. Then God can give us our reward without our having to face him first. But C.S. Lewis tells us: “God can show Himself as He really is only to real persons. And that means not simply to persons who are individually good, but to men and women who are united together in a body, loving one another, helping one another, showing God to one another. For that is what God means for humanity to be like; like players in one band, or organs in one body. Consequently the one really adequate instrument for learning about God, is the whole Christian community waiting for Him together.”

So in reality what C. S. Lewis is saying is that our salvation cannot be done alone, we need the Christian community to be present and we need to be a part of that community. That’s God’s plan and that is why he sends out evangelistic missionaries to help form that community. We are all called to not only be a member of the Christian community, but to help form it by our witness and our prayers.

And then there are others who are called to lead in the formation of the Christian community and we have someone in our midst today who is answering the Church's and thus Jesus' call to lead. At the end of Mass listen to Brenna O'Hara on her mission to college students on campus to share with them the vision of what God's plan means to them.

And what is God's plan for us? Salvation. St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians today gives us a panoramic view of salvation that stretches from the past, to the present, to the future. Thus in the beginning "God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him." That is, God chose us, personally, each and everyone to be in his presence. But we turned away and lost that status. God of course foresaw this and did not give up and leave us to our own devices which means death of the soul. "In love he destined us for adoption to Himself through Jesus Christ. In him we have redemption by his blood, in him we have forgiveness of transgressions in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us." Thus God graces us with salvation in spite of ourselves only if we receive it. We receive it through repentance and allowing Jesus to cleanse us bodily and to heal our soul. If we thus take on Jesus and become a part of him, we have an awesome future. St. Paul says: "In all wisdom and insight, God has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times to sum up all things in Christ in heaven and on earth." Thus if we are a part of Christ, a part of his body, we will see

God face to face. That is our salvation. But to be a part of Christ, we have to give up our comfort zones in this life and strike out in faith that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Or as C. S. Lewis says in his fable about Aslan, the lion, a stand in for Jesus: Is he safe? Course he isn't safe. But he is good. He's the king I tell you."