

7th July 2019 (14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

Isaiah 66:10-14; Psalm 65(66):1-7,16,20; Galatians 6:14-18; Luke 10:1-12,17-20.

'The kingdom of God is very near!'

As Jesus continues on his journey towards Jerusalem (we were told about this journey in last Sunday's gospel reading), he sends our seventy of his disciples to go out and prepare the way. I find two things of particularly interesting in this passage: the instructions given to the disciples and the message they are asked to deliver.

Like Moses, Jesus chooses seventy of his followers to share in his ministry. He is the new Moses sent by God with a message to remind us all that we form part of God's kingdom. Created in the image and likeness of God, our role is for us to live in God's presence and to facilitate the coming of his kingdom (thy kingdom come!).

One can speak about the kingdom of God from a different perspective. Jesus' mission is to reveal the face of the Father. To come to know God and God's infinite love for us is to grow in his image and likeness. This knowledge helps us participate in the salvation that has been given to us.

This message is so important that nothing should be allowed to stand in its way. The only thing the disciples – and therefore ourselves – are allowed to carry with us is the message itself; the knowledge of God's love for us is sufficient! No purse, no staff, no sandals – the message needs to be unencumbered and free!

Without staff and sandals the messengers present themselves as very weak; without any protection from the harsh road surfaces and from wild animals. Without a purse they are totally dependent on what is offered them, if nothing is given them, they do not have the option of buying not even for their basic needs. This total vulnerability to the environment and total dependence on the people they are visiting reflects in a much clearer light the strength and the wealth contained in the message itself!

Once again, like in last week's gospel passage, there is a great sense of urgency. There is no time for the messengers to stop and salute anyone on the road! There is a definite determination to get the job done, people need to be made aware of the presence of the kingdom. The disciples are not being told to be rude, but to treat this with the urgency it requires.

The messengers are ordered to accept whatever hospitality is offered them. This too emphasises urgency – there is no time to go around seeking better food or lodging – and vulnerability – they are at the mercy of their hosts, accepting what they are given with gratitude and without complaints. The hospitality they receive is in itself a sign of God's kingdom, God's love and generosity!

The message does not change whether people accept the messengers or not: the kingdom of God is very near! There is no hiding from this basic message and all should be made aware of this reality! God invites all people to discover and know him. People might choose not to welcome the messengers or to listen to the message, but this does not put them out of God's love and mercy. God still invites them to participate and hence the still need for the message to be proclaimed!

For us today, how do we welcome God's kingdom in our life? How do we speak and witness to the message of God's kingdom to all around us? Do we let our judgements and opinions get in the way of the message or are we ready to proclaim, whatever the cost?

The kingdom of God is very near!

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