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Sunday Mass Study Notes for Lectionary 84: 03-02-2025



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> *1 SIR 27:4-7*
> *When a sieve is shaken, the husks appear;*

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> *As the test of what the potter molds is in the furnace,*
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Today's reading profoundly reveals how a person's words reveal their heart. It closely parallels James' words in James Chapter 3. Words are very powerful, and the writer shows how one's words easily reveal our faults, so it is perhaps better to keep silent. Words are the fruit of a person which discloses the inner workings of the heart. My fifth-grade teacher, Mr. Dow, who has since gone away to heaven, had many sayings. I remember that he used to tell me, better to be silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt! His words and those in the first reading make good advice for us today.

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> *1 Corinthians 15:54-58 NAS95 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.*

In the first verse of the reading Paul quoted from Isaiah 25:8 which reads, "*He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken*." The context of Isaiah was the restoration of Israel after their exile to Babylon as a result of their sin. Paul quoted the Septuagint version of Isaiah and applied it in an eschatological context. Paul looked forward to God's ultimate restoration of His people in glorified bodies like what Jesus displayed after His resurrection (1 John 3:2, "we shall be like Him"). Next, Paul quoted from Hosea 13:14, a passage in which God is chastising Israel for their sin and telling them that they will not be ransomed from physical death. Here, Paul used an Old Testament quotation to show the uselessness of trying to outrun the penalty of sin, because all sin leads to death (verse 56, Romans 6:23a, "for the wages of sin is death"). Israel had forsaken the Lord and was paying the price for it through exile and ultimately death. Thankfully, the reading does not end there, with an all-important "but God" idea in verse 57. "[B]*ut thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*." As believers in the Lord Jesus through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), we have achieved victory in an eternal sense the moment we believed. Through our faith, we can stand strong in the Lord, "steadfast, immovable" (v. 58a) while living with God's promise that our work for Him will be worthwhile (v. 58).

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Living with these biblical truths greatly helps us as we age and watch as our family and friends pass away. The hope that we have in Jesus helps us to safeguard our hearts from the hopelessness experienced by people in this world who have no such hope.

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The Gospel reading from Saint Luke is Jesus' continued teaching known as the Sermon on the Mount in which he addressed "a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon" (Luke 6:17).

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Jesus taught His disciples and the crowds some important truths about the nature of His kingdom, a kingdom which was already there (Luke 17:21), and yet to come, as we saw in the second reading. First, the truths of the kingdom must be taught by teachers of the real truth (vv. 39 – 40). Jesus, Peter, and Paul were very clear about what was happening in their times about false teachings and about what would happen in the future. Jesus said, "*Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves*" (Matthew 7:15). Paul said, "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths*" (Timothy 4:3-4). Peter said, "*But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves* (2 Peter 2:1). Someone once said about the post-millennial spirit of our age, "the only truth that counts is true truth."

Second, believers are called to approach others (and God) with great humility by first examining themselves and getting right with God by repenting of their sins and seeking reconciliation with people whom they have offended (vv. 42-43). The good work of God is produced by a person with a humble heart, such a person is known for the good works that flow from their relationship with God (v. 44). As we saw in the first reading, a person is known by the words they speak (v.45).

It is perhaps easy to judge the false nature of a group of people called a "cult" whose teachings are so absolutely unbiblical that anyone inside the Christian church can easily understand their insidious nature. However, when false teaching happens under the guise of the Christian church it can be much harder to recognize and deal with. When Jesus spoke His Sermon message, He was beset by the false teachings of the cult of the Pharisees. They taught that the way to reach God was through strict observance of the Law as they interpreted it, a religion of "do." Jesus came along and

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Reflection Questions

1. In the second reading we saw how Paul quoted from the Old Testament where God had poured out curses upon His people Israel for turning away from their covenant with him. However, Paul showed how the Gospel of Grace eclipsed this temporal punishment and pointed the way to an eternal kingdom with eternal life in a perfect human body. How does this contrast between the two covenants help you to understand the struggles you face in your own life? In what ways do you feel that God has in some way given you over to death? How does reflecting upon and growing in your faith in Jesus help you to understand how to achieve victory over these thoughts?

2. Doing the work of God is evidence of our salvation through faith in Christ Jesus as our works flow from our hearts that are changed by God Who also placed His Holy Spirit in us as a testimony to the truth. However, in what small ways have you perhaps bought into certain aspects of the false Gospel of "do" versus the true Gospel of "done" in which we feel that in some ways we have earned the right to eternal life? In what ways do enduring hardships point us more deeply to the work done by Jesus on the cross for us and oppose the false construct offered by the Pharisees who vainly worked to earn their salvation?

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Reflection Questions

1. In the second reading we saw how Paul quoted from the Old Testament where God had poured out curses upon His people Israel for turning away from their covenant with him. However, Paul showed how the Gospel of Grace eclipsed this temporal punishment and pointed the way to an eternal kingdom with eternal life in a perfect human body. How does this contrast between the two covenants help you to understand the struggles you face in your own life? In what ways do you feel that God has in some way given you over to death? How does reflecting upon and growing in your faith in Jesus help you to understand how to achieve victory over these thoughts?

2. Doing the work of God is evidence of our salvation through faith in Christ Jesus as our works flow from our hearts that are changed by God and Who also placed His Holy Spirit in us as a testimony to the truth. However, in what small ways have you perhaps bought into certain aspects of the false Gospel of "do" versus the true Gospel of "done" in which we feel that in some ways we have earned the right to eternal life? In what ways does enduring hardships point us more deeply to the work done by Jesus on the cross for us and oppose the false construct offered by the Pharisees who vainly worked to earn their salvation?

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