Study Notes for the Sunday Mass

Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. Find us on the web at: http://www.christiansforchrist.org

We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Roman Catholic Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures.

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5

Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **6-5-2016**. This week we begin with a reading from one of the Old Testament history books, 1 Kings. The passage relates the story of a miraculous healing by the prophet Elijah, who is sometimes thought of as a precursor of the Messiah Jesus. The second reading tells us how the Apostle Paul received the message He preached largely to Gentiles. It comes in the epistle that most clearly differentiates the Gospel message from Judaism. The Gospel reading once more is from Luke. The miraculous event of this episode might very well remind us of the story of Elijah in the first reading.

Read Online:http://www.christiansforchrist.org/articles/weekly-study-notes-for-the-sunday-mass/06-05-2016

Introduction to the First Reading:

Anyone familiar with today's story will recall the context. In the opening verses of chapter 17, we read about the prophet Elijah moving on to the region of Zarephath where a famine was raging because of the lack of rain, which Elijah had predicted in verse 1. Here, he encountered a widow who was gathering sticks for a fire to prepare what she thought would be a last meal for her and her son. The widow followed the prophet's instructions, and the flour and oil were multiplied to provide food for the three of them.

First Reading:

> *1 Kings 17:17-24 NAS95 17 Now it came about after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. 18 So she said to Elijah, "What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!" 19 He said to her, "Give me your son." Then he took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was living, and laid him on his own bed. 20 He called to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, have You also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?" 21 Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray You, let this child's life return to him." 22 The LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived. 23 Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." 24 Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."*

In today's episode, the son becomes ill and dies. The widow, forgetting the miraculous provision of food that had sustained her and the boy, blames Elijah for her son's death. Without any argumentation, Elijah takes the boy upstairs, stretches out over him, and prays. He calls upon the LORD to let the child live, and God grants his entreaty. It's a wonderful, heart-warming story, of course. And we should praise God for His answering prayer and restoring life. After all, this is not fable; it is recorded in God's Word, and it is historical reality.

We can benefit from this historical incident by understanding at least two important truths. First, God is the giver of life. As Job said, God gives and God takes away. He remains God. This miracle demonstrates once again His omnipotence and His grace. The widow's response also bears an important reminder. She said that she recognized that God's presence and power were evident in His prophet. Although, we won't likely perform life-giving- miracles as Elijah did, still we should live and speak in such a way that those who observe our life and words will recognize that we belong to God.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

In the opening verses of his letter to the church in Galatia, the Apostle Paul argues strongly against false teachers who have perverted the true gospel of Christ. His language is pretty emphatic. He says that even if angels were to teach a gospel that was different from what he taught, they should be "eternally condemned" (v. 8). He, then, proceeds to tell them about his own experience in receiving the gospel from God Himself.

Second Reading:

> *Galatians 1:11-19 NAS95 11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; 14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. 15 But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. 18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.*

Paul makes it clear that what he had taught the Galatians about Jesus had not come from the teaching of other men. God's gracious provision of salvation by faith through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was revealed to Him by God Himself. It was on the road to Damascus (the story is told three times in the Book of Acts) that Jesus appeared to Paul (then called Saul) and dramatically changed his life.

The writer indicates that his readers knew that Saul, before his conversion, had persecuted the church of God, even trying to destroy it altogether. Because of his zeal for God and Judaism, he had risen high in his religious pursuits, being even more zealous for Jewish traditions than his contemporaries. God intervened in the persecutor's life, and Paul acknowledges that God had chosen him ("set me apart") even before his birth. The Apostle makes it very clear that it was all by grace; Paul had not earned the right to know and serve Jesus. In fact, his pre-conversion life and his sinful nature (like all the rest of us) could earn only God's wrath and condemnation. But in God's mercy—not giving us what we deserve, He offers us grace—giving us what we don't deserve as a gift when we put our trust in Jesus and acknowledge Him as Lord.

Paul continues to relate something of his early experience as a believer. He didn't consult with the church leaders, but he went away for meditation and learning. It was only after three years that he went

to Jerusalem where the largest number of Christians was. He became acquainted with the Apostle Peter and stayed with him for two weeks. Paul is telling his readers all of this history so they would understand that the gospel he preached did not come from the teaching of other men but by direct revelation from God.

Perhaps the most important lesson from this reading for us today is to acknowledge that the gospel message preached and written by the Apostle Paul is the continuation of the story of Jesus—His life, ministry, and provision for the salvation of those who will trust in Him.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

This significant event in the life of Jesus reminds us of the earlier reading of Elijah's restoring the widow's son to life. We must keep in mind that miracles in the Bible have great temporal benefit when they occur, but their primary purpose is to certify the prophet (or Messiah) as a bona fide messenger of God and to authenticate their message.

Gospel Reading:

> *Luke 7:11-17 NAS95 11 Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. 12 Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." 14 And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" 15 The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother. 16 Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and, "God has visited His people!" 17 This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district.*

The story is simple. A widow's only son has died and is being carried to his burial. Jesus demonstrates once again his compassion for the suffering, and he orders the young man to arise. Immediately, he is restored to life and begins to speak. There is a significant difference in this event from the prophet's raising of the widow's son in the Old Testament. In Elijah's case, he was alone with the boy. There were no witnesses, but, of course, the miracle happened nonetheless. In Luke's story, there were the people in the funeral procession ("a sizeable crowd") and Jesus and His disciples who were accompanied by a large crowd.

We can be sure that the mother was overjoyed at the raising of her son, but this miraculous resurrection brought fear to the crowd. Whether that was basically terror because of the extraordinary event or fright at the power demonstrated by this unusual preacher, we do not know. In any case, whether they understood fully what they were saying or not, they spoke truthfully, acknowledging that Jesus was "a great prophet." Furthermore, they confessed that "God has visited His people." The report of this event spread widely throughout the countryside. One might wonder, then, why Jesus was not more widely accepted by those who saw the miracles and heard the preaching.

Before we cast judgment upon those who did not respond in faith to what they witnessed, accepting Jesus as their promised Messiah, we must examine our own hearts. We have this story and many more recorded in the Gospels. We have the teachings of the New Testament witnesses, which, as the Apostle

John wrote, "... were written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. In what ways do the miracles recorded in the Bible cause you to bow in adoration and worship before the God of the miracles?

2. Have you rejected the false teachings of men and trusted fully and only in the Gospel message that Jesus paid the price for your sin and offers you the gift of eternal life by faith?

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass, visit this web site:
http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/060516.cfm
Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Lectionary: 90
Source(s):
Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/
Scripture quotations taken from the NASB
Keywords: miracle, resurrection, trust