

Third Sunday of the Ordinary Time, Year - A
Isaiah 8: 23 – 9:3 || 1 Corinthians 1:10-13,17 || Matthew 4: 12 - 23
COME AFTER ME

Synopsis:

Christ, the light will bring us joy, happiness, and freedom.

Let there be no divisions among us.

Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy of the OT.

“Repentance” and the nearness of the kingdom of heaven are the message of the preaching of Jesus.

Jesus invites every one of us to come and follow Him.

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The first reading today is from the Prophet Isaiah and is the same one that is used at Midnight Mass for Christmas. The prophet proclaims the coming of the Lord into the world and describes this as a great Light (Christ), which brings men joy, happiness and freedom. It is of the prophecy of the Savior to come into the world.

The second reading comes from the First Letter to the Corinthians and encourages us to work together. St. Paul requests us to be united in love with Jesus Christ. If Christ has come to free us from all bondage and sin, then we must all belong to Christ and there should be no divisions among us. Yet as we look at our world today, we Christians have all kinds of divisions. Yes, in many ways we have fewer divisions and hatred among us than we had perhaps 100 years ago or even 60 years ago, but we are still terribly divided. St. Paul wants there to be no divisions among us, but that we are united in the same mind and with the same purpose. The Gospel of Matthew today is at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus Christ. Matthew cites the portion of the Prophet Isaiah which we read as the first reading today and tells us that Jesus is the fulfillment of that prophecy. Many times, we Christians forget that Jesus is the fulfillment of the whole of the Old Testament, the whole of Jewish Scripture. The more that we can understand the Old Testament, the more we can understand Jesus Himself.

Jesus devoted his public ministry to preaching about the nearness of the kingdom of heaven and to inviting people to become his disciples. As we reflect on Jesus’ preaching, his most important message is “repentance” for our sins. In other words, Jesus challenges us to turn away from the ‘darkness of sin’ so that we can ‘live in the light of God’s loving presence.’ Sin alienates us from the kingdom of heaven. Whereas repentance demands humility as to be a fundamental change of heart. We cannot claim to be motivated and guided by God’s will if we are not repentant disciples.

Matthew also tells us today of the call of Peter and Andrew, and then the call of James and John. It is amazing. Why would these fishermen respond so readily to the call of Jesus? Why don’t we respond as strongly to His call? He will free us from all bondage to sin if we let Him!

He will help us be united with one another and with all Christians if we let Him. Jesus, Himself invites us to become extraordinary and to give our lives completely to Him. This whole world can be transformed into the place of salvation if only we walk in the ways of Christ.

“Come and follow me,” Jesus gave the call, but on certain conditions: he who follows Jesus must renounce families, profession, and even his own will. He must give up everything and dedicate his whole self to the service of God. That is, he must be fully free to do the Will of God. His must be life as simple as that of Jesus. His must be a life of commitment. We notice a big change in Life for the disciples. They leave the past to follow the Lord: leaving behind their old jobs and roles but also what might block them from living fully. To follow the Lord joyfully we need to believe in ourselves as valued in the sight of God. We pick up messages about ourselves from significant people and we have to let them go. We believe that the first gift of our faith is the love of God, the humble God who became one of us in love.

In religion, we need to touch into the love and the call of God, by gradually letting go of the things in the world that prevent us from knowing God’s love. The first of the apostles had something new. Each of us, week by week can get this new thing, the love of God. Everything else flows from that. To know the love of God is a huge gift, and to know the love and acceptance of another or a few others in life is also a huge gift. Both are one, in every love and friendship we have. As St. Francis de Sales says, “Let everything we do be done in Love.”

Quotes for Further Reflection:

- “If repentance is neglected for an instant, one can lose the power of the Resurrection as he lives with the weakness of tepidity and the potential of his fall.” - St. John Chrysostom
- “Now is the time to say to Jesus: “Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned Your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with You. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into Your redeeming embrace” - Pope Francis
- “Actions speak louder than words. Let your words teach and your actions speak.” - St. Anthony of Padua
- “This is the very perfection of a man, to find out his own imperfections.” - St. Augustine
“To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often..” - Bl. John Henry Newman
- “Love to be real, it must cost—it must hurt—it must empty us of self.” - St. Mother Teresa
- “To love God is something greater than to know Him.” - St. Thomas Aquinas

Blessings!
Fr. Raja Selvam