



THE LORD'S DAY

5th Sunday of Year A

The Watermead Apostolate offers this weekly page as a helpful guide and background to the readings used at the Catholic Mass for each Sunday of the Year.

The reading guides were written by Fr John Daley (RIP) who served as a Catholic priest in various parishes around the UK and world for 53 years.

Fr John co-founded Watermead in 1992 as a voice for people who wished to share understanding of living their faith through their God-given gifts and talents.

'The Lord's Day' incorporates some of those voices in this presentation and also through its many publications ~ books, resources, cards, music, etc.

Further information on what we produce, our story and the mission of our Christian apostolate can be found by visiting www.watermead-apostolate.co.uk

First Reading

Isaiah 58 : 6-10

We are in the third part of the Book of Isaiah. This section seems to have been written by various disciples (the prophet is long dead), late in the 6th century B.C. Today's reading is a wonderful passage of social and moral teaching but it is worth seeing the background.

Chapter 56 contrasts the goodness of pagan converts and the corruption of Judah's leaders. Chapter 57 condemns idolatry but also offers consolation to those who are humble and contrite, promising healing and peace - but there can be "no peace for the wicked" (57:21).

Chapter 58 is a strong dialogue between the Lord and Judah. Judah pleads innocence and genuine religious worship: The Lord answers with today's reading. The fasts that please God are not belly fasts but fasts from oppression and fraud; not pretentious self-abasement but bringing joy to the oppressed, giving bread to the hungry and clothing to the naked.

Judah is called to be a light in the darkness, an oasis in the wilderness, to offer renewal to a broken world.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 2 : 1-5

Paul has rebuked the Corinthians for causing divisions in the community, favouring certain preachers against others, trusting in the frail philosophies of the learned against the truth of the crucified Christ. Now, in today's reading, he explains his own way to them.

He did not come to Corinth as a learned or polished speaker, but only to give them what God had given him (see 1 Cor.5:1-8). He then worked for his living as a tent maker, and spoke only of a crucified Christ. Paul trusted in the Holy Spirit to guide him, though not in human learning, and he spoke as he did so that they would turn to God for greater understanding rather than to human philosophers.

Paul speaks of coming to Corinth "in fear and trembling" - a phrase worth chasing through the bible to see where it is used: Gideon challenging the men of Israel (Judges 7:3), earthly rulers before the Lord (Psalm 2:11), the woman healed of her bleeding (Mark 5:33). Making such contrasts enlighten us to the task translators and interpreters have when they work on the bible.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 5 : 13-16

It is always constructive to compare ideas in one part of the bible with ideas in other parts. Did Jesus say "He who is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12:30) or "Those who are not against us are with us" (Mark 9:40)? Did he say "Do not parade your good deeds before others" (Matthew 6:1) or "Let your good deeds be seen so that people may give glory to God" (Matthew 5:16)? Jesus said all four and there are other examples in the Gospel of Jesus' seeming to contradict himself.

The few verses of today's reading come early in the Sermon on the Mount. Their meaning seems to be clear, but compare them with passages in Mark and Luke and the teaching broadens, the images vary. Salt in Mark (9:50) and Luke (14:34) is not Matthew's salt. Jesus' advice in Matthew 5:14-15 is not the same as in 6:1-6. John's 8:12 is the fullness of Matthew's 5:14. Mark's 4:21 has the lamp under a bed as well as under a tub. Luke also has the bed (8:16) and then repeats the parable (11:33-36) with different teaching from 8:16-18.

Did Jesus reinterpret his parables in his various teaching venues? We are always to ask about people's differing memories and the common sense question of Jesus as teacher - who varies the wording of his teaching according to the audience and the circumstances. He would, for example, have told the parables in different words in different places.

Wisdom from the Saints



"We must catch his words
as best we can"

CONTRASTS THAT TEACH

Light in the darkness;
A crucified Christ;
Advice that varies.

This week I shall . . .
be a light in someone's darkness.

People of God

Betty was told she had cancer. She accepted the news with courage and faith. Whilst walking in the parish garden she saw a small Solanum bush and said how much she liked its flowers. She asked if it might be dedicated to her, as is the custom for plants in our parish garden. Of course, we agreed. A little while later a plant named "Pope John Paul II" was placed nearby, and we watched the two grow beautifully side by side! We saw Betty in a happy remission, and the news from Rome was of a surge of new energy in the Pope. We laughingly said that people and the plants were flourishing together. A few months later the Pope's plant seemed to wither, yet Betty's was still strong, its lovely purple flowers a feature of the garden. Suddenly there was a flowering of the Pope John Paul plant, not on its original climb, but coming out of the purple flowers of Betty's Solanum! It was a pleasant surprise, as we thought the plant had died but it had been cradled by the Solanum. Then, Betty died. The bush is bare now, but the flowers will return in the spring, as they do each year, and we shall remember Betty again . . . as we shall Pope John Paul II.

Questions of Faith

The Words of Jesus Once the question is raised we see the obvious answer: that people heard Jesus' words but remembered them differently. Thus, in Matthew, Mark and Luke we read of the same incident or teaching - but expressed in different words. We do it all the time with each other, expressing the meaning without quoting the exact words someone has said to us. So with Jesus: the people remembered his meaning in their own words.