

Thirteenth Sunday of the Year – June 28, 2020

2 Kings 4: 8-11, 14-16a – Acts 6: 3-4, 8-11 – Matthew 10: 37-42

Last week, the message of God in Scripture was clear: “Fear nothing.” This week, however, seeking that message had me scratching my head in an effort to understand the what was being said.. Jesus, as we heard, makes a rather strong statement, one that is even “strange” as he is speaking to his apostles. He tell them that he is to be more important to them than their own families. Often, in search of that message, it is beneficial to consider the other Scripture passage that accompany the Gospel reading, to discover what insight the may provide.

For example, we heard the story about Elisha, the prophet, an his encounters with the a woman of “influence.” Her interest was to have the prophet’s presence in her home to be permanent. He was, in her view, more than another guest of her hospitality. She recognized the holiness that was experienced with this prophet. He was truly representative of the holiness of God. This was the holiness she wanted in her home and in her life.

We then heard from the writing of Saint Paul. We are reminded of the close bond that is to exist between Christ and ourselves through baptism. Paul understands that we have been joined with Christ in his death. But we also share in his Resurrection, the restoration of life. What is part of the past is dead. Now we are to live a new, restored life.

Baptism, to Paul, is not simply a ritual. It is to be a genuine transformation.

As Elisha represents the holiness of God, and as Paul teaches of the basic change that is to take place in us through Baptism, we get a clue, a better insight, into the point that Jesus seeks to make. In receiving Jesus, in accepting him, we accept and receive who has sent him, our God and Father. It is not just a matter of who he is, but who Christ makes present to us. Jesus' call to us is what the Creator of Life, the One who gave us life intends for us to be and how we are to live. It is not simply the idea that we are to be nice or kind, but it is essentially how we have been made to be. We are to live in unity and peace, honoring God and respecting and loving our neighbor.

Jesus then takes it a step further. He tells his followers that when others receive them, they receive him as well. The message of Christ in this is that they not only bring themselves, they bring Christ as well. Those who genuinely bring Christ thus reveal the presence of God.

A clear understanding of the message of God to us today is that the call made to us is that we are to be aware that a relationship with Christ, with God, is to impact us and be more effectively present in us than even the relationship in a family. Being committed to Christ in our lives gives us a new life, a new dignity, a new respect, a new loving concern that is beyond that which may exist in a family.

In the possibly puzzling words that we have heard today,

Christ challenges us to live the hope and the potential that the freedom of this new life in him will bring about in each of us: a dramatic reveal our good and gracious God.