

Thirtieth Sunday of the Year – October 27, 2019

Sirach 35: 12-14, 16-18 2 Timothy 4: 6-8, 16-18 Luke 18: 9-14

Each week when we hear passage from the Scriptures read to us when we gather for the celebration of the Eucharist, we can understand that God is speaking to us through the inspired writers. In a particular way today, however, we can hear Jesus speaking directly to us. He is challenging our thoughts about who each of us is and how each of us stands in our relationship with God.

In some respects we can be like the Pharisee. Often the  name “Pharisee” has had a negative sense. But in the story that is told, he is not really a bad individual. What he says about himself is true. He fulfills the expectations that God has of him. He tried to do the best that he can in life. What are his weaknesses or failings? He thought of himself worthy of better judgement or consideration by God because he was not like what he considered the other person to be. He measured himself in his own terms rather than recognizing the fundamental truth that all of us, no matter who we are, are in need of God’s mercy and love. What may bring us to that need may be different, but none of us is entitled to the generous gift of God to us.

In other respects, we might consider ourselves more like the tax-collector. We recognize our faults, our failings, our sins. We know that even if we might be considered to be good persons, there is so much more each one of us can do in our

relationship with God and in our relationship too the world we live in. In fact, the more we do, if done with genuine humility and acknowledgment of God, the more we understand how much we are in need of God's love and how much we value the reality of God's presence in our lives. It makes no matter who we are, priest/penitent, saint/sinner – in the relationship with God we are as described by Sirach in the reading we heard: we are like an orphan or widow or a lowly one or a servant, as we stand in our nothingness in comparison with God's everything.

We also heard how St. Paul understood his encounter with God in his life. He recognized how truly blessed he was, as each one of us ought to do. He recognized that he had done all that he could have done in his life, as we might hope that we have done as well. He recognized that it was faith and confidence in God that sustained him in the trial and the end of his life that was before him. So are we also to do.

So, then who is God in relationship to us? This is what the tax collector and St. Paul knew and realized for themselves. God is the source of life. God is the source of all the potential we possess. God who regards each of us with a merciful and kind love, looks on each of us with a love equally available to all. Whether the tax collector or St. Paul who had persecuted the followers of Jesus were denied the presence of God's love that their acknowledgment of the need for God's love gained for them.

No matter who we are or what we are in our daily lives, we are to show forth and give evidence in our lives that mercy and loving kindness is available to us from our good and gracious God.