

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time - A

Note: Where a Scripture text is underlined in the body of this discussion, it is recommended that the reader look up and read that passage.

1st Reading - Isaiah 58:7-10

Until the 18th century it was presumed that Isaiah of Jerusalem wrote all 66 chapters of the book which bears his name. The tradition of single authorship was first questioned around the year 1167 but serious questions were not raised until the late 1770's and early 1780's. At that time scholars maintained that chapters 40 through 66 were written by a different author who lived some 150 years after Isaiah; during the Babylonian exile. They named this unknown author Deutero- or Second Isaiah. In 1892 a scholar argued for a separate author of the suffering servant songs and of chapters 56 through 66, whom he named Trito- or Third Isaiah. Protestant scholars were generally convinced by the soundness of the new arguments. Catholics, although with some hesitation, tended to agree. A negative response of the Pontifical Biblical Commission on June 29, 1908, precipitated by fears of the Modernist movement, made Catholic scholars revert to an ultraconservative viewpoint of single authorship. Once the theological problems were solved, so that the inspiration of major parts of the Bible was not being questioned but only the literary and historical questions of an author's name and date, Catholics began to argue again for the split authorship of Isaiah. Most Catholic scholars now work with a Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah thesis.

The reasons for separate authorship of chapters 40 through 55 are, first of all, historical. The addressees are no longer inhabitants of Jerusalem, but exiles in Babylon. Jerusalem has in fact been destroyed and now awaits reconstruction. Babylon is no longer an ally, for she has destroyed Jerusalem and deported the Israelites. The former prophecies about Jerusalem's destruction have been carried out (Isaiah 1:23-31; Jeremiah 7:1-15; Ezekiel 22, 24) and Israel now awaits a new, more glorious future. In Trito-Isaiah (chapters 56 through 66), Israel is back again in her own land, and the problems are different than those pictured in Isaiah chapters 1 through 39. Our reading today comes from Trito-Isaiah.

⁷ Sharing your bread with the hungry,

Literally, "breaking your bread" (see Acts 2:46; Mark 6:41; Mark 14:22). Jesus, in Matthew 25:31-46 makes the final judgement depend upon the kindly acts of charity mentioned here.

sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. ⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. ⁹Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am! If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; ¹⁰If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday.

When lowliness unites all men, then God will fill the need of the world with his glorious presence.

The final age will have to come.

2nd Reading - 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

We continue this week with Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians as he addresses divisions within the Church. As you will recall, two weeks ago we heard Paul address those who claimed to belong to Apollos, those who claimed Cephas, others who claimed Paul, and even those who followed only Christ. At that time he reminded them all that the Church is the body of Christ and as such can not be divided. Last week he reminded us that God has chosen what is weak by human reckoning to be His followers. If anyone can boast, they can boast only in that they have been chosen by God. This week he reminds us that we are to pay attention to what is important – we are to hear the clear message of the crucified Christ and pay attention to it and not the messenger.

¹ When I came to you, brothers, proclaiming the mystery of God,

God's testimony. The resurrection of Jesus is God's testimony. Some early manuscripts have "mystery of God" instead of "testimony of God" but most scholars today agree that "testimony" is what best fits the context.

I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. ² For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Paul's attention is focused on the crucified Christ; not the type of savior that either the Jews or the Gentiles expected.

"It was the incarnate Word who accomplished the mystery of our salvation. It was He who freed us and redeemed us. We believe in Him who is our Savior through the cross and through His resurrection from the dead." [Marius Victorinus (ca. A.D. 356), *Against Arius* 1A]

³ I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling,

Paul may be making an allusion here to the difficulties he experienced in Corinth ([Acts 18:5-17](#)).

"Was Paul really afraid of danger? Yes, he was, for even though he was Paul, he was still a man. This is not to say anything against him but rather about the infirmity of human nature. Indeed it is to the credit of his sense of determination that even when he was afraid of death and beatings, he did nothing wrong because of this fear. Therefore those who claim that Paul was not afraid of being beaten not only do not honor him, they diminish his greatness. For if he was without fear, what endurance or self-control was there in bearing dangers?" [Saint John Chrysostom (A.D. 392), *Homilies on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* 6,2]

⁴ and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive (words of) wisdom, but with a demonstration of spirit and power, ⁵ so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

The conviction Paul's message conveyed and the success that met his preaching at Corinth were due

to the Holy Spirit, and not to rhetorical eloquence or philosophic reasoning. Thus, the faith of the Corinthians rests on God's power and not on human eloquence or wisdom.

“Human wisdom denied the cross, but faith proclaimed the power of God. Wisdom not only failed to reveal the things which people sought after, but also it encouraged them to boast of their own achievements. But faith not only gave them the truth, it also encouraged them to glorify God.”
[Saint John Chrysostom (A.D. 392), *Homilies on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* 6,3]

Gospel - Matthew 5:13-16

Having just completed His Sermon on the Mount which we heard last week, Jesus applies the beatitudes to the hearers of the sermon. He makes this application by using the homely metaphors of salt as seasoning and the single lamp that was used in the one-room house of the Palestinian peasant.

Jesus said to his disciples: ¹³ "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

Strictly speaking, salt cannot go flat, lose its flavor, and still be salt. In Judaism, salt can become unclean and thus need to be thrown out. Salt is both a spice and a preservative and so is a good teacher. The description of the fate of the salt uses imagery for the Divine judgement.

¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.

Light imagery is usually applied to God. Here it is applied to the disciple who is to let God's light shine through him. The mountain may be a reference to Jerusalem.

¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house.

The imagery presupposes a one-room Palestinian house and a common clay oil lamp. The disciple lives not only for self but for others.

¹⁶ Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

This verse contains a delicate balance between doing good works and not being proud or taking credit. The life of discipleship should not lead to arrogance but to the conversion of many to “your heavenly Father.”