

32nd Sun C... Where Are We Going?

Introduction

Today's Scripture Readings talk about life after death. They remind me of a story... one of my favorites: the Prof Einstein Story:

Story... Where Are We Going?

Albert Einstein, the great physicist, was once traveling from Princeton on a train when the conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of every passenger. When he came to Einstein, Einstein reached in his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his trouser pockets. It wasn't there, so he looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it. Then he looked on the seat beside him. He still couldn't find it.

The conductor said, "Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it."

Einstein nodded appreciatively. The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket.

The conductor rushed back and said, "Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don't worry. I know who you are. No problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one."

Einstein looked at him and said, "Young man, I too know who I am...what I don't know is where I'm going."

Today's Scripture Readings remind us of where we're going.

I SS

Today's first reading from the Book of Maccabees looks to the eternal reward which our ever faithful God will give to the Maccabee family after their faithfulness to God, even in the midst of persecution.

Would we be faithful to God in the face of persecution?

We might not be called to shed our blood for our faith, but do we live our Catholic faith in the midst of our culture which is post Christian and in some ways biased against our Catholic faith?

In Paul's letter to the early Christian community in Thessalonica, a city in NE Greece, Paul assures the Christians that if they remain faithful
... The Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you...

In the Gospel Jesus assures us that we are 'children of God' and
... the dead will rise... God is not a God of the dead, but of the living.

In the Book of Revelation, Chapter 21, when John describes our sure hope in life after our death, he says:

... Then I saw new heavens and a new earth. The former heavens and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer... I heard a loud voice from the throne cry out, 'This is God's dwelling among men. He shall dwell with them and they shall be his people and he shall be their God who is always with them. He shall wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away.' (vv 1-4)

Another Story:

The story is told of the elderly man and his wife who die together and come to heaven. Jesus meets them at the gate and begins to show them around heaven. He points out a lovely big house, spacious rooms, a sauna and swimming pool in the back, and he says to them, "That's yours!" The old fellow says, "Wait a minute. How much?" Jesus says, "Why free, of course. This is heaven." Then Jesus shows them a whole fleet of cars, in case they want to drive around heaven, and he tells them to pick anyone that want. The wife is excited... the man says, "Wait a minute. How much?" Jesus says, " Why free, of course. This is heaven." Then Jesus takes them to restaurant row and shows them all the different Restaurants, each with excellent food. Jesus explains to them that if they don't want to cook they can come to any of these at any time. The old fellow says, "Wait a minute. How much?" Jesus says, "Why free of course. This is heaven." Finally the elderly fellow turns to his wife and exclaims, "And you with your Bran Flakes and Metamucil and Health Foods and vitamin pills... We could have been here a lot sooner!"

This is our firm hope... we know that we are children of God, that God has our picture in God's wallet! We are precious to God. God doesn't make junk.

II Some questions:

Ask yourself:

Why am I here? What is my life all about?

One answer our culture tells us that we are really self made individuals, / islands of self interest, / free to choose by ourselves what we will be.
Life after our earthly journey?...not a concern.

“Why” are we here and “Where” are we going?

Our culture might answer, we were created to be entertained and to consume...

to be happy consumers.

You only go around once, so get as much out of life as you can now.

Questions we Christians must ask ourselves in the face of this onslaught are...

What is important to me?

How important is *stuff*?

Cable TV? My favorite football team? My favorite soap opera? Reality TV?

Shopping?

Do any of these really define what my life is all about?

What is important in my life?

Where am I headed?

III Our Faith

I believe God made us to love, not to be happy.

We will be happy if we love.

Remember last Sunday's Gospel...

Zacchaeus is a tax collector... someone hated and shunned by the Jewish people of Jesus' time because he worked for pagan Rome. In collecting the taxes he also cheated his own people who had to pay taxes to Rome.

Zacchaeus hears Jesus coming with a crowd and is curious. He wants to get a look at this supposed prophet and wonder-worker. His encounter with Jesus changes his life...

something happens as Jesus calls Zacchaeus to come down out of that tree. Something in Zacchaeus' hardened heart breaks. He repents his sinfulness, his selfishness, his self-centeredness, his this-worldliness.

Jesus touches him with God's mercy. Jesus even dines with him...

I am reminded of Revelation 12:20...

Behold I stand at the door and knock and if anyone opens the door I will come in with them and dine with them and they with me.

As we go thru our lives we sometimes get seduced by our culture. Are we really here to be an entertained consumer?

Am I really here to get a lot of stuff –

new and improved stuff –

which is guaranteed to make us happy – money back guarantee.

What clutters our minds and seems to drag us down and keep us forgetful of why we are here and where we are going?... worries, fears, resentments, jealousies, guilts, regrets?...

Can we take them to Jesus, take them every day and ask Jesus to help us keep your eyes on our goal... our heavenly home, the promise of living in loving God's presence and awaiting the new heaven and the new earth.

Can we bring a little heaven into our life now by having God in our life each day and bringing God's love and compassion and care and joy into our daily lives...

Conclusion

A vision of heaven and earth...

Heaven and Hell

Hell... Picture a circle of people sitting side by side, so close to each other that their shoulders are touching. In the center of this circle is a big pot of delicious looking and smelling stew. The scent of it makes you want to try some right now.

The folks in the circle have a large wooden spoon with a long handle taped to their right forearms. They are yelling at each other angrily, they looked

lean and hungry... there was no happiness there. The problem was that because they were so close together they couldn't get a spoon of the delicious stew into their mouths. They would bump into each other when they tried to feed themselves.

This is truly hell.

Heaven... Picture a circle of people sitting side by side, so close to each other that their shoulders are touching. In the center of this circle is a big pot of delicious looking and smelling stew. The scent of it makes you want to try some right now.

The folks in the circle have a large wooden spoon with a long handle taped to their right forearms. These folks are happy and joyful, smiling and joking, and well fed.

What's the difference... ah, then you notice it. Each person is dipping his or her spoon into the stew, and then feeding each other. They are taking care of each other first.

As we come to this Eucharist we remember where we are headed... our hope of heavenly joy in God's presence.

We also realize that we have a little bit of heaven here as we offer ourselves with Jesus to loving God.

We soon remember God's love for us poured out on the Cross.

And we come forward to be spiritually fed and strengthened by Jesus – a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.