

3<sup>rd</sup> Sun A (2)  
**We Don't Need God?**

**Introduction...**

A while ago I met a very interesting family. The parents were very successful career people, with gifted pre-teen kids. They lived in a very upscale neighborhood, in an excellent school district for their kids. They were good, happy people, involved in their community and generous. At one point in our conversation we got onto the topic of God and going to Church. They calmly informed me that they didn't go to Church, and they really "didn't need God." They didn't want their children to be burdened with the "God thing." Their children knew no prayers. What do you say to good folks like that?

**I Our Culture and God**

For many people in our society today life is about...

You're born,  
You get an education,  
You get a job,  
Maybe you get married and raise a family,  
Hopefully you get to enjoy some grandchildren,  
You retire,  
Play golf,  
And die.

Life is about my education,  
My job,  
My family,  
My kids,

My grandkids,  
My bills,  
My worries,  
My health,  
My, my, my.

And for many people today the refrain they too often sing is,  
"I did it my way," – or at least tried to.

There's very little sense of God in so many people's lives,  
very little awareness on a daily basis of God's presence in their lives.  
They might believe in God,  
but God is far away, and hardly concerned about their lives.  
When problems occur, when a crisis comes...  
then *maybe* they turn to God... then they "need God."

## **II Disciples of Jesus**

We who try to follow Jesus see life differently.

Life is not about us, it's about God.

We pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth"... rather than "My Kingdom come, my will be done on earth"...

In today's Gospel we hear the story of Jesus' call to his first disciples to come and follow him.

We hear Jesus proclaiming the coming of God's Kingdom,  
and his disciples are to follow in Jesus' footsteps,  
try their best to do God's will,  
and to bring a bit of God's kingdom to their world.

What is God's will? What is God's kingdom about?

We will hear more about this in the coming Sundays...

We will hear stories about sin and forgiveness,  
about Jesus' concern for the suffering and outcasts of His day,  
and Jesus' command to us to feed the hungry, cloth the naked,  
and visit the sick.

We will hear about not making money or power our idols –  
Not dedicating our lives to these things...

But rather dedicating our lives to loving God and loving our neighbor,  
and about helping our neighbor in need.

Who is our neighbor? Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan.

We will carefully listen to these teachings of Jesus,  
and the stories Jesus told.

Then we will enter Lent and the Mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of  
Jesus.

What a tremendous story of Jesus' love for us,  
of how the powers of darkness,  
or envy and jealousy,  
of hatred and resentment,  
of anger and abuse...

try to overwhelm Jesus and blot his memory from this world.

Jesus will face these Powers of Darkness,  
and with love and forgiveness in His heart  
he will ultimately conquer them.

The light of Christ will shine forth victorious.

Now it's our turn to journey thru this world,  
following in Jesus' footsteps,

trying to live the way Jesus wants us to live –

that's doing God's will –

and knowing that we do not journey alone.

Jesus help us each day.

Jesus is our Good Shepherd.

Jesus goes before us on our Journey of Life, showing us the way.

Jesus brings light into the darkness of our lives.

Jesus challenges us to walk in His footsteps.

Jesus is the Bread of Life and the Cup of Refreshment,

who gives us the strength for our Journey.

Jesus is the power of Forgiveness who lifts us up when we fall.

Jesus is the center of our lives.

It's about Jesus,

not just about me, me, me.

We need to be people of prayer, daily prayer, to look at life this way...

otherwise we will give in to the temptation to forget about Jesus,

forget about God,

and begin to center our lives around ourselves...

me, me, me... my kingdom come, my will be done.

### **III The First Couple We Talked About...**

Remember the couple at the beginning of this sermon?

What did I say to them? Did I rebuke them? – NO.

Did I go into a big explanation of what it means to follow Jesus? – NO.

They didn't need God.

They probably thought God was for losers –

Many have thought this and taught this...

Marx, Stalin, Freud, even Carl Sagan.

Of course, for others God is the heart of life...

Dr. Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, Pope John Paul II.

Did I try to explain this to the couple? NO.

I tried to simply share with them who Jesus is to me...

the face of God...

and the shining example of what it means to be fully human.

I figured that life would happen to them...

Suffering and pain will come their way.

God doesn't need to punish them for their arrogance or short-sightedness,

Ordinary everyday living will do that, as they brush up against life's

shortcomings and flaws,

sickness and trials,

along with experiencing the sinfulness of others and their own sinfulness.

I thank God that God is merciful, and understands our foibles and failures.

### **Conclusion**

As I reflected on that couple I remembered the story of the Prodigal Son – all the details don't fit this couple's life... but enough do...

They have taken their share of the inheritance and said to their Father, "I don't need you now."

They will spend their inheritance and use their gifts – hopefully for good.

They will encounter suffering and pain – that's part of life.

And hopefully they will finally return to the Father,

who patiently awaits their return with open arms.

And hopefully I will not be like the "older brother" in the story of the Prodigal Son,  
who has remained faithful to the Father,  
and worked for the Father,  
and done the Father's will,  
but who is upset that the Father would welcome his lost brother home and even rejoice in that return.  
Hopefully I will await that return and rejoice along with my heavenly Father when my brother and sister "come home."