

19th Sunday C (4) Child of God

Introduction

I have four questions for you...

- 1.) Who are you?
- 2.) Who are you?
- 3.) Who are you?
- 4.) Who are you?

I want to tell you a story that ties into these questions and helps shed light them and today's SS readings.

A Child of God...

A seminary professor was vacationing with his wife in Gatlinburg , TN. One morning, they were eating breakfast at a little restaurant, hoping to enjoy a quiet, family meal. While they were waiting for their food, they noticed a distinguished looking, white-haired man moving from table to table, visiting with the guests. The professor leaned over and whispered to his wife, 'I hope he doesn't come over here.' But sure enough, the man did come over to their table.

'Where are you folks from?' he asked in a friendly voice.

Oklahoma ,' they answered.

'Great to have you here in Tennessee ,' the stranger said. 'What do you do for a living?'

'I teach at a seminary,' he replied.

'Oh, so you teach preachers how to preach, do you? Well, I've got a really great story for you.' And with that, the gentleman pulled up a chair and sat down at the table with the couple.

The professor groaned and thought to himself, 'Great ... Just what I needanother preacher story!'

The man started, 'See that mountain over there? (pointing out the restaurant window). Not far from the base of that mountain, there was a boy born to an unwed mother. He had a hard time growing up, because every place he went, he was always asked the same question, 'Hey boy, who's your daddy?' Whether he was at school, in the grocery store or drug store, people would ask the same question, 'Who's your daddy?'

He would hide at recess and lunch time from other students. He would avoid going into stores because that question hurt him so bad. 'When he was

about 12 years old, a new preacher came to his church. He would always go in late and slip out early to avoid hearing the question, 'Who's your daddy?' But one day, the new preacher said the benediction so fast that he got caught and had to walk out with the crowd.

Just about the time he got to the back door, the new preacher, not knowing anything about him, put his hand on his shoulder and asked him, 'Son, who's your daddy?'

The whole church got deathly quiet. He could feel every eye in the church looking at him. Now everyone would finally know the answer to the question, 'Who's your daddy?'

'This new preacher, though, sensed the situation around him and using discernment that only the Holy Spirit could give, said the following to that scared little boy.. 'Wait a minute! I know who you are! I see the family resemblance now; You are a child of God.'

With that he patted the boy on his shoulder and said, 'Boy, you've got a great inheritance. Go and claim it.'

'With that, the boy smiled for the first time in a long time and walked out the door a changed person. He was never the same again. Whenever anybody asked him, 'Who's your Daddy?' he'd just tell them, 'I'm a Child of God.'

The distinguished gentleman got up from the table and said, 'Isn't that a great story?'

The professor responded that it really was a great story!

As the man turned to leave, he said, 'You know, if that new preacher hadn't told me that I was one of God's children, I probably never would have amounted to anything!' And he walked away.

The seminary professor and his wife were stunned. He called the waitress over & asked her, 'Do you know who that man was -- the one who just left that was sitting at our table?'

The waitress grinned and said, 'Of course. Everybody here knows him. That's Ben Hooper. He's governor of Tennessee!'

And so my question to you is, 'Who are you?'

II Our Culture

Our culture tries to tell us who we are.

We are consumers – buyers of happiness. So many products promise us happiness – money back guaranteed.

We are people who need constant entertainment... so many TV stations and programs to choose from, Netflix, big screen movies and, of course, virtual reality games... so many promising to entertain us, help us to escape, help us to relax and enjoy and be happy.

We are tech savvy people. I must humbly confess that I don't have a 'smart phone'. No, I have a 'dumb phone'.

Would you believe that? I'm not in constant contact with friends, snap chatting and tweeting and instagraming. But I'm still happy! Imagine that! Actually, I do tweet almost every day – but I try to tweet something spiritual... go to PghMonastery.

III Today's Scriptures

Today's Scripture readings remind us who we are... or rather, 'Whose we are'.

The first reading calls us God's 'holy children'.

The second reading from Paul's letter to the early Christians reminds us that we are people of faith, people who believe that God is 'Our loving Father'.

Let's look at today's Gospel. It is taken from Luke, chapter 12. In this chapter Jesus teaches that life is a gift from God, our loving creator Father.

In today's Gospel Jesus teaches us:

Do not live in fear... it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom.

What's that all about? God's kingdom is God's reign over us, God's presence in our life,

God's graciousness in our life, God's goodness to us. After all, we are God's children.

How often we fail to recognize this. We don't appreciate the gifts of life that God's blesses us with each day, even in the midst of a broken, sinful world.

Jesus then alerts us that we are responsible for the gifts God blesses us with. We are stewards of God's gifts...

We are stewards of our own talents, abilities and interests.

We are stewards of our loved ones.

We are stewards of our jobs.

We are stewards of our neighborhood.

We are stewards of our city.

We are stewards of our State.

We are stewards of our nation.

We are stewards of our world.

We are stewards of this earth, its riches and its beauty.

We will answer to God regarding how well we handled the gifts of life our loving Father blesses us with.

Do we act justly?

Do we try to treat others with fairness and respect?

Are we honest?

Do we try to give our best efforts on our jobs, even when we encounter challenging fellow workers or clientele?

Do we do what we can to keep our neighborhoods clean, green and safe... and neighborly.

Do we do what we can to keep our City livable and just?

Or do we just complain? Or get angry? Or just withdraw?

What about our State and our Country...

We can't solve all of the problems...

but do we just complain and get angry or worried – what good does that do?

At the very least we can pray to our Father for our country, especially in this time of election.

Let's return to today's Gospel...

We are stewards.

We do the best we can in whatever capacity we find ourselves.

Today's Gospel concludes with these words of Jesus:

From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and to the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded...

This is certainly a challenge for all of us, blessed with and entrusted with our life, talents and interests... our loved ones and friends, this beautiful city and state, our wonderful country and our rich and beautiful earth.

This is quite a challenge in a world that is broken and suffering. But this is an important part of what Jesus teaches.

Conclusion

As we continue with this Eucharist we pray for our Church and our city and our Country.

And we ask the Lord's strength to be good stewards of the blessings God has so abundantly showered upon us.'