

SSC REFLECTION:

32st SUNDAY Year B. Mk 12:38-44. [Fr Donal McIlraith]

Sunday Text. Mk 12:38-44.

[38] And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and to have salutations in the market places

[39] and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts,

[40] who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

[41] And he sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums.

[42] And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny.

[43] And he called his disciples to him, and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury.

[44] For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living."

Comments

1. These are Jesus last words in the temple. He is ending his week's teaching here. He entered on a donkey as Messiah. As Messiah he cleansed the temple reminding them that a profound conversion was needed. Now he does two things, he blames the scribes for how they act and praises the poor widow.
2. The scribes know God's law and are supposed to be the spiritual guides of the people. Jesus puts the people on their guard against the behavior of the scribes, against how they act. They emphasized their dignity by going around in long clothes. They wanted to be treated with honor everywhere. Now this was exactly what Jesus had reproached the disciples about. We saw how, on the road to Jerusalem, they too wanted to be first, to be important. The disciples have a hard time learning the lesson of the cross, the lesson of service as the only way to greatness. The scribes look forward to the Messiah, the Son of David, setting up a glorious kingdom like David's and look

forward to having important places in it – like James and John!
This is not to be.

3. Among their worse faults is that instead of taking care of widows and orphans as commanded in Exodus 22:22-23, they manipulate them to benefit from them. This goes directly against the second commandment, love your neighbor as yourself.
4. Jesus compares the rich with the widow. She has very little but gives everything she has to God in the temple treasury. The rich give a bit, she gives all. We see that she is living the first commandment: loving God with her whole being and trusting him for everything, day by day. Leaving everything behind to follow Jesus, the disciples have started on this way of life also but they haven't got to where the widow is yet. She is also a wonderful model of Jesus who surrenders all in love on the cross.

Notice: Don't forget we have ***The Grace Ministry*** for widows and widowers that meets every first Friday after the 1 o'clock Mass at the Cathedral Crypt. Encourage the "grace ministry" among you to join us or link with us.

An extra note for your interest: Mk 12:35-37 is an important if difficult few verses just before this week's Gospel. It is not in the Lectionary but I include a note about it for anyone interested.

Mk 12:35-37

[35] And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?"

[36] David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, declared, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put thy enemies under thy feet.'

[37] David himself calls him Lord; so how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly.

This is not an easy passage to figure out but it is very important. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Messiah. Bar Timaeus also used a messianic title, calling him Son of David. The Jewish people were expecting a descendant of David, a “son of David” to come and restore a kingdom like David had, huge and very powerful but here on earth. They would also like this Messiah to drive out the Romans. Jesus has been telling his disciples that his kingdom will not be this sort of kingdom. His kingdom will come through the service of love, through the cross!

In Mk12:35 to 38, Jesus quotes Ps 110 which every Jew back then would have known. They also believed that David speaks through the Holy Spirit in this and every psalm. The scribes have been saying that the Christ, the real Messiah, will be David’s son and believed he will set up a glorious powerful kingdom like David’s, on earth. Jesus is now asking the scribes – and everyone in the Temple (these are almost his last words in the temple) - “But who is the Messiah? Whose son is he?” He uses David’s own words from Ps 110 to explain this. In Ps 110 David says, “The Lord, i.e., God, said to My Lord.” Now every Jew knows that when David says “my Lord” he means the Messiah. For them “The Lord says to my Lord” means “God says to the Messiah”. BUT, David is calling the Messiah “my Lord.” It is impossible, they all know, for a father to call his son, “MY LORD.” So, even tho’ the scribes say that the Messiah is “the son of David”, David myself in Ps 110 is saying, no, the Messiah is not my son he is my Lord. Now if the Messiah is not David’s son, whose son is he? Jesus leaves the question open here in the temple but God himself gave us the answer at the Baptism and Transfiguration when he said, “This is MY beloved Son.” The centurion also said it at the cross, “Truly, this man is the Son of God.” We conclude that the Messiah (Jesus) is not David’s son but the very Son of God. And the kingdom he is bringing is NOT an earthly one like David’s but a heavenly one where everyone who follows him in love must carry the cross!!!