

4th Sunday After Lent

Psalm: 147

First Lesson: Exodus 16:4-15

⁴ Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

⁵ And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

⁶ And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt:

⁷ And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord; for that he heareth your murmurings against the Lord: and what are we, that ye murmur against us?

⁸ And Moses said, This shall be, when the Lord shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord.

⁹ And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the Lord: for he hath heard your murmurings.

¹⁰ And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

¹¹ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

¹² I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God.

¹³ And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

¹⁴ And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.

¹⁵ And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.

Second Lesson: John 6: 27-40

²⁷ Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

²⁸ Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

²⁹ Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

³⁰ They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

³¹ Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

³² Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

³³ For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

³⁴ Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

³⁵ And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

³⁶ But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

³⁷ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

³⁸ For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

³⁹ And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

⁴⁰ And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Introduction

Corrie ten Boom was born in Amsterdam in 1892 into a traditional, religious family where faith went back many generations. Her upbringing, lovingly described in her books, included a saintly father who was a skilled watchmaker, and a sister, Betsie, who had deep spiritual insight. The family atmosphere was one filled with prayer and loving care that extended out into the community. Corrie's family were well known for their generosity and had a particularly good relationship with the Jewish people around them who they considered 'God's ancient people.'

When the Netherlands was brutally invaded by the Nazis in 1940, those deep links with the community translated into Corrie and her family protecting those whom the invaders wanted to seize and eventually kill. They took in Jews and members of the Dutch resistance and, after hiding them within the house, passed them on to the underground network. Within months, Corrie found herself associated with the resistance and involved in risky schemes to obtain enough food in a time of rationing. A secret chamber, which could take six people, was installed behind a false wall in Corrie's bedroom.

As the Nazi occupation tightened around them it became more necessary to use their home as a safe house for Jewish refugees, although it came with great personal risk. In February 1944, the family was betrayed and reported, and all of them, along with thirty other people, were arrested and taken to prison. For Corrie,

who was 52 years old at the time, this is when the real ordeal began. She was held in solitary confinement, learning after several weeks that her father had died but that the Jewish people who were in the 'hiding place' were safe. Reunited with Betsie, she was then sent to a political camp and finally on to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany, where women prisoners were either used as forced labor or simply executed. There they held worship services after the hard days at work by using a Bible that they had managed to smuggle in. Through the two sisters' teachings and examples of unfailing charity, many of the prisoners there converted to Christianity. While they were imprisoned at Ravensbrück, Corrie and Betsie began to discuss plans for creating a place of healing after the war. Unfortunately, the health of Betsie, who had always been weak, deteriorated and she died at the age of 59. Despite the living conditions, Corrie would always find a way to thank God for the small things, even during her time in the concentration camp.

A short time later, Corrie was released, as a result of what seemed to be a clerical error. A week afterwards, all the women in her age group were sent to the gas chambers. After a difficult journey back to the Netherlands, she was reunited with the surviving members of her family and, with the war ending, opened her home to those in need, this time many with mental and physical disabilities. She soon began an evangelistic ministry which grew rapidly. One challenge that she faced was encountering a German guard who had been cruel to Betsie at

Ravensbrück and finding that in her heart, she could forgive him. For nearly thirty years Corrie preached worldwide, visiting more than sixty countries. In 1971 her book *The Hiding Place* was published and became a best-seller. It is a very moving account of her life and gives a glimpse into who she was and how the events of her life transformed her. Corrie moved to California where, after a lengthy illness, she died in 1983 at the age of 91.

It has been estimated that with her family and neighbors, Corrie ten Boom saved the lives of over 800 Jewish people and other refugees. She was honored by Israel for her work as one of the ‘Righteous Among the Nations.’ The life and witness of Corrie serves as an inspiration of love, caring for others, steadfast faith in God, and her courage and her ability to forgive others who had harmed her. One thing that stands out about her was what she had when her ordeal began. We see how her faith had a solid foundation, a foundation in Jesus Christ. Her faith had a solid formation based on years building deep spiritual resources from constant prayer, scripture reading and worship of God. As Jesus told us, “*Everyone then who hears these words and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock*” (Matt. 7:24). Corrie knew that rock was Christ. Corrie did not just have strong belief and faith, she lived her life, and the actions she chose, in agreement with those beliefs. Helping the helpless, ministering to those who were sick or hurting, and constantly leaning on the grace and promises of God were a way of life for her. Corrie learned to look at situations from how she thought Jesus

would see them. This allowed her to be compassionate to those who abused her because she knew God wanted her to love and forgive them. She stayed active in preaching her whole life because she believed in the power of evangelism and spreading the gospel to those who did not know Jesus. Her personal faith gave her a perspective that built her faith in God and the divine given human capacity for hope and resilience, as well as the importance of forgiveness in the face of unimaginable death and suffering.

Body

(John 6: -32 Jesus reminds the people not to work for food that will perish, but strive for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will provide for them. He tells them that the works of god are to believe in the one who He sent to them. Comparing Jesus to Moses, the crowd ask for a sign from heaven, to which Jesus reminds them that it was not Moses who provided the Manna, but God.)

In our second lesson reading today from the Gospel according to St. John, (6:27-40) we hear a crucial passage where Jesus tells the people that He is the bread of life. In this passage, He shifts the focus from physical bread to spiritual bread, emphasizing His divine nature and the path to eternal life.

“Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed”. (v. 27)

Then, when asked what works they must do to perform the works of God, Jesus answers that the work of God is to believe in the one whom God has sent. To

do the work of God, they must hear and receive what Jesus is telling them and apply these teachings to their life. The crowd of people asks for a sign, comparing Jesus to Moses, who provided manna in the wilderness (Ex. 15:16). Jesus clarifies that it was not Moses, but his Father who provided for them the true bread from heaven.

(John 6:33-39) Jesus declares to the people that He is the bread of life, the one who has come down from heaven and gives life. He promised that those who come to Him will never be hungry, and those who believe will never thirst. He also tells the people that He did not come down to earth to do his will, but instead, the will of the Father. All that are given to Him will be raised up to the Father on the last day. All that see Him and believe will have eternal life.)

As this passage continues, Jesus tells the people that He is the bread of life that came down from heaven and gives life to the people. Through faith in our Lord, we long for nothing. Like the manna in the wilderness nourished the people of Israel physically, He completely satisfies our spiritual hunger through the food that endures to eternal life, which is Himself. Jesus simplifies the requirements to a single essential act: believing in him. This emphasizes that salvation is not earned through human effort, but received by grace, through faith in Christ. From Paul's letter to the Ephesians, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8)*

In this passage Jesus is also asserting His own divine origin and authority. He is telling the people that He is not a prophet like Moses, but the very source of spiritual life. Jesus repeatedly emphasizes that eternal life is obtained through

believing in Him. This belief is not just an intellectual understanding, but a deep trust and commitment in Him. In verse 37 Jesus says, *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* Although there are difficulties in entering the kingdom of God, this speaks of the Divine aid we are all given and how the Father guides us through the Holy Spirit to the Son, who will not reject us. This emphasizes God's sovereign grace and gives a sense of security and belonging to those who believe.

⁴⁰ *“And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

Jesus' promise to raise believers up at the last day underscores the hope of eternal life and the ultimate victory over death. This resurrection is tied directly to belief in Him. Jesus' constant reference to the will of the Father, reinforces the idea that Jesus is acting in complete obedience to the Father's divine plan of salvation.

In essence, our reading today reveals Jesus as the divine provider of spiritual life, emphasizing that faith in him is the key to eternal life and that God's sovereign grace ensures the salvation of those who believe.

Action

In our daily life it is easy to hear these words and not realize how important it is to put God first place. The enemy is constantly trying to push us away from

God and put things into our lives, or thoughts into our heads, which make us question our faith. It is important to remember to trust that God is present in our lives. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus reminds us to not worry about what we are going to eat, drink or wear. *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”* Through prayer we can ask God to help us to reach for those things that are Holy and righteous and know that all the riches and pleasures on this earth are nothing when compared to what God does provide for us. Daily prayer will invite God into our lives and help us establish a deeper trust. Our faith will grow stronger as we release the power of prayer in our lives. Saying the daily offices also keeps us grounded and connected to God. Reading the Word of God on a daily basis will also remind us that Jesus is the Bread of life and why our obedience and faith in Him is so important. Finally, like Corrie did, it is important to intentionally live our lives as Jesus taught us and make a commitment to grow in our faith and commit to prioritizing our faith in God.

Conclusion

When we hear the account of Corrie ten Boom, we are reminded that it is possible to endure the trials of this life and stay focused on what God has promised. It is by no means an easy task, but through God, and with God, we can endure. *“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. (v. 35).*

When we walk with Jesus on the way to Calvary, we are reminded of the power of forgiveness and love. How hard must it have been for Corrie to forgive her captors, but she knew that is what Jesus commanded us to do. In her book, *The Hidden Place*, she gives a powerful account about how God commands us to forgive and how she opened her heart to do so. In Matthew, Jesus tells us, “*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will the Father forgive your trespasses*” (Matt. 6: 14) Corrie saw this as something she needed to do to be free and not held captive from the experience.

During this season of Lent, let us look at all of the struggles we have in our lives and how God gives us the strength to endure and go through them. Let us also look at those in our lives we need to forgive and take the steps to do so. In the same way, “*Let your light so shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:16).

Let us pray.

Eternal God and Father, by whose power we are created and by whose love we are redeemed: guide and strengthen us by your Spirit, that we may give ourselves to your service, and live this day in love to one another and to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.