

Homily - Lk. 12: 32-48
19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C
06th August 2022

Story is told of a King who had a Court Jester in his palace. And the King was quite fond of him as he kept the King and his royal court amused and happy. One day the King gave the jester his sceptre, his staff and then told him: ‘Keep it and when you find another person more stupid than yourself, a greater fool than yourself, give it to him’.

Years passed by, and the King fell seriously ill and was very close to his death. Now, the King wanted to see the jester and accordingly he came in. The King was truly happy to see the jester and he now told the clown that he is going on a long journey.

“Long journey”, the jokester with deep respect asked the King and then he continued: ‘And when will you return to the palace your Majesty? ‘And what preparations have you made for your journey, my Lord? ‘No, I’m never coming back’ replied the King and I have made no plans or preparations for my departure, the King mumbled.

Now, the jester was shocked at this and he said: ‘Your majesty, you are going on a journey of no return, and you’ve made no preparations for it?’ He now stood silent for a while and then slowly plucked up courage and said: You mean you are dying and so bidding good bye to all of

us forever, and still you are totally unprepared. Do I now need to look for a greater fool than you yourself, Your Majesty? So, take this staff with you, my Lord". And then the jester gave the sceptre back to the King and walked away.

Well! Jesus in today's Gospel uses a brief parable to tell us that we have to be ready for His arrival, for His coming. But we don't know when, where or how Christ will intervene in our lives. But He says that we must be ready, that we must be prepared like servants awaiting the return of their Master.

One day a seeker came to the Buddha who was sitting beneath a Bodhi tree where we are told he had his enlightenment. The seeker was truly taken up by the extraordinary radiance and peaceful presence of Buddha. The seeker now asked him: "Master, what are you? Are you a celestial being or God?" "No", said the Buddha. "Well! I believe, you must then be some kind of a magician or wizard", to which the Buddha again responded: "No". "What are you then, are you a man?" "No", he said. But the seeker persisted: "Well then! Tell me, what are you?" and now, the Buddha gently, but firmly replied: "I am awake".

Now, that is precisely the message that Jesus has for His disciples as they journey together towards Jerusalem. Jesus has been warning his disciples against amassing riches,

instead of becoming rich in the sight of God. And now, He moves on to advise them on watchfulness.

The disciples are now asked to be like those servants waiting for their Master to return home from a particularly long dinner party. He may return at the second watch or it may be the 3rd watch which is just before dawn. But they need to be awake and ready to greet the Master whatever time He comes. And then Jesus warns them not to be caught out like the house holder who was robbed. If he had known at what hour the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house. In other words, Jesus clearly tells them: “Stay awake”.

But now, often times, no matter what we do to remain prepared, to stay awake, God still has a way of surprising us, asking us to do things that we never expected. And ‘try as we might’, ‘pray as we might’, we find ourselves surprisingly unprepared when God intervenes, when God asks us to grow or change in certain unexpected ways. Are we spiritual slackers? I don’t know. Doesn’t God find us often unprepared when He comes to us with His surprises?

May be, the passage from the letter to the Hebrews we heard today offers us an insight into this: The author of the letter is found using Sarah and Abraham from the Old Testament as an example of people who really had faith.

‘Faith’, the author of the Hebrews says is the realization of what’s hoped for and evidence of things that aren’t seen.

Well! Abraham was a person of faith. But notice how his faith is described in the letter to the Hebrews: when God asks Abraham to leave his home, leave everything that he knew, everything that was familiar to him, Abraham said “Yes” even though he had no idea where God was taking him. When God called Abraham to enter into the Promised Land eventually, Abraham said ‘Yes’, even though he couldn’t see how he is going to get settled there with his family. When God told Sarah and Abraham that they would have a child, they both believed God even though they couldn’t figure out how this old barren couple could possibly give birth. God was constantly surprising Sarah and Abraham, constantly asking them to believe that good things could happen even though they couldn’t see how God was possibly going to work it out which raises the question: How did Abraham and Sarah believe? How did they trust even when they weren’t prepared? Well! They loved the Lord and they knew that the Lord loved them. And because they loved the Lord, they trusted God even when God asked them to do what they weren’t prepared for.

Now, perhaps when Jesus asks us to be prepared, he is asking us to love God deeply and to be aware of how much God loves us. And then, when God surprises us, we’ll be

able to trust the Lord and say: Lord, I have no idea where this is headed, or how you are going to work this all out, but I know that you love me and that you won't let me down in the end.

So, God is in every surprise that life hands to us, and in every unexpected event that we face. Hence, as people of faith, we don't have to panic when life throws the unexpected at us. I believe Jesus will keep surprising us until our last breath and even beyond. But in the meantime, we are called to be ready, to be prepared and to stay awake.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a well-known German Theologian was asked by his critics: "Why do you expose yourself to all this danger? Jesus will return any day, and all your work and suffering will be for nothing." Bonhoeffer said, "If Jesus returns tomorrow, then tomorrow I will rest from my labors, but today I have work to do. I must continue the struggle until I am finished."

Well! Dear brothers and sisters, let us then pray that we may have the grace to live out today faithfully, so that we become worthy of an eternal tomorrow in God's kingdom. God bless you all, **Amen!**