

COME TO YOUR SENSES

Let Your "Yes" be "Yes".

Ez 18:25-28

"Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Phil 2:1-11

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.



The confrontation that takes place in today's readings shows different modes of thinking in relation to God's word. God's expectations and our expectations seem to be different. During the time of the prophet Ezekiel, the people were accusing God of being unjust. During the time of Jesus, the leaders of Jerusalem and the temple were accusing Jesus of blasphemy. The people did not like the fact that God through the prophets challenged their wicked ways and threatened them with punishment. The leaders of Jerusalem did not like the fact that Jesus challenged their authority and piety.

The Way of the Lord is Unjust

The common argument against God is the presence of suffering. Why does God allow good people to suffer? We seldom take responsibility for our actions and do not want to acknowledge that our sins are the cause of suffering that takes

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father

Matt 21:28-32

"What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

place in the world. Behind the tragedy of Malaysian jetliner MH 17 are the wicked people. The Old Testament in its theological interpretations of the history of the Jewish nation made it clear that behind their tragedy was their rejection of God's will and scorn for God's commandment. The people who were supposed to be righteous and teach others the way of righteousness turned wicked. Their wickedness brought disasters upon their lives. If only they would come to their senses in seeing where they were heading for.

The righteous turns wicked and a son's "yes" is nullified by his opposite action. What is God supposed to do in such a situation? Both examples bring us to Adam, our ancestor, the first righteous who turned wicked. By disregarding God's commandment, "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:17), he brought disaster upon himself and the entire human race. Paradise was lost, the way to the tree of life was closed, and the history of humanity is plagued by violence and injustice. Is the way of the Lord unjust because he is punishing those who scorn His will, disregard His commandments and destroy this beautiful world which belongs to Him?

Instead of accusing God of being unjust, we should marvel at His mercy. Thanks to Noah, Abraham, Moses, the prophets, and other truly righteous people, this world is still being kept alive. It is for those righteous and those sons and daughters who after initial "no" come to their senses, repent, and embrace God's will that God shows mercy to all of us.



Change Your Ways

"The tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matt 21:31). Truth is painful. John's message was simple and clear: "Repent, because the kingdom of God is near" (Matt 3:2). The tax collectors and the prostitutes embraced the message, confessed their sins and brought forth the

God's Commandments

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;

You shall have no other gods before me; You shall not bow down to them or serve them;

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain;

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;

Honor your father and your mother;

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour;

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife;

You shall not desire anything that is your neighbour's.

does not go. Yet, there is in the word. This son is Jesus, the beloved of the Father. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes" (2 Cor 1:19). He calls us to follow Him: "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil" (Matt 5:37). Let our "yes" to God's will and our "no" to sin be manifested in commitment to build our lives on God's commandments.

fruits of repentance (Matt 3:6.8). Yet, the leaders of Jerusalem and the priests of the Temple were not among those who embraced John's call to turn to God. They played politics. They thought that by collaborating with the Romans they could save the nation. How blind they were. Then, by choosing Barabbas over Jesus, they rejected the way of peace and embraced violence that brought disaster upon their own nation. "When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die" (Ez 18:27).

Jesus shows us the way to repentance. Whereas Adam wanted to be like God, Jesus wanted to be like us: "though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:6-7). Adam wanted to climb to the heights of God, Jesus came down from heaven to live among us. Adam is a symbol of a fallen humanity, Jesus Christ symbolises the new possibility provided for us by God, transformed life, a life free from sin. The choice is ours. We can follow Adam's path, disregard God's will and His commandments and reap the fruit of sin, death. We can also follow Jesus' path, embrace God's will, be obedient to His commandments and gain true life. "When a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life" (Ez 18:27).

Conclusion

In today's Gospel we have two sons. One says "No", but repents and goes to God's vineyard and another says "Yes", but New Testament one more son, who says "Yes", and acts on His

May God bless all who remember us in prayer and support our ministry.

New Life Asia Team