

SUNDAY MESSENGER



Truly this man was the Son of God

The Faith of the Centurion

There are many actors in the Passion story. The temple authorities succeeded in arresting and getting Jesus killed. There is Judas the betrayer and Peter the denier. Pilot delivered the death sentence and his soldiers executed it. Darkness truly had its hours. "And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour" (Mk 15:33). Yet in the midst of this darkness, there was a voice of the Roman centurion proclaiming his faith in Jesus: "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mk 15:39).

Jesus the New Adam

Adam, although in human form, wanted to be like God and ate the forbidden fruit. Jesus, although in the form of God, decided to become like us and "he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). The consequences of both choices are strikingly different. Adam brought death, Jesus brought life. The earth was cursed because of Adam, the world is blessed because of Jesus. Adam's sin separated us from God. Jesus' death has ended this separation. "And the

And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah."

And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God".

(Mark 15:33-39)

curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom" (Mk 15:38).

In order to undo what Adam did, Jesus behaved in a way that does not meet our expectations about someone who is divine. He told his power hungry disciples that "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45) and throughout his whole life he lived up to this maxim. This service was perfectly visible in washing the feet of his own disciples (John 13:1-17). Jesus in this way commented on his action: "I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:15-17).

Imitating Adam brings death, following Jesus leads to life. The temple authorities, Judas, Peter, Pilot and his soldiers all lived in Adam. The Roman centurion has moved from "Adam" to life in Jesus by confessing his faith in the Lord. How about us? Do we remain in Adam or live in Christ?

Truly, this man, no other

The Gospel of Mark begins with a proclamation: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk 1:1). Yet, no human person confesses his or her faith in Jesus as the Son of God during Jesus' entire ministry. Those who knew Jesus' true identity were demons but He did not allow them to speak (Mk 1:24-25, 34). Our Savior refused to prove his identity as the Son of God by turning down Satan's proposal of making bread out of stones and jumping from the pinnacle of the temple (Matt 4:1-7). Jesus did not come to this world to entertain it but to save it.

Jesus is confessed as the Son of God at the moment of his tragic death. That remains the most surprising aspect of Mark's Gospel. Not at his highest but at his lowest, our Lord's true identity shines to those who have eyes to see. The temple authorities

mocked the crucified Lord and the disciples ran away frightened, but that foreigner who participated in the tragedy got saved. Since then, all those who stand by the cross get enlightened and transformed. "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:23-24).

The world and the Church have been enamored by success. It's supposed to prove that we are on the right track and that God's blessing is upon the things we do. However, Jesus shuns success (Mark 1:35-39; John 6:14-15) and the Passion story is about failure that God has turned into the greatest success in the history of salvation. Do you confess Jesus as the Son of God? Under which circumstances?

Conclusion

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord" (Is 55:8). The Son of God gives up his divine form, becomes like us and dies on a cross like a criminal. Truly God's thoughts are not our thoughts. The more we should be awed by the centurion's confession of the crucified Jesus as the Son of God. Somehow he could see what we often overlook that God's power is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor 12:9). I wish all of us could have his faith.

May God bless all of us