

Coop's Scoops # 93 Sunday August 30th, 2020

We are united by the Holy Spirit as we worship today.

Our Readings:

Exodus 3: 1-15 Ps 26:1-8 Romans 12: 9-21

Collect:

Author and Giver of all good things, graft in our hearts the love of your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us in all goodness, and of your great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen,.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 16: 21-23

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." ²³But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

The Sermon:



This Sunday, I need you to visualize me standing in the pulpit with some cans of playdoh lined up on the sides. Pretend this is a rather intense Children's Story, relax and just enjoy the way that play doh can help us to learn the truth, perhaps in a clearer way.

A solid foundation for our life as disciples can be described as a pyramid of truth. On the bottom row, picture three cans....One represents the truth of Genesis which tells us in so many ways that God **made** us and everything in creation. The Second can comes from the Exodus reading which assures us that God **cares** about His people, and intervenes in time and space and history to deliver those who trust in Him. And the Third can describes the relationship between God and Moses established over a burning bush, and reminds us that we live in personal relationship with our Creator who not only gives us HIS name, but also knows us by OUR names. So we have three foundational truths: God made us, God cares for us, God has a name, which He told us. (and God knows our names, too)

Imagine us moving now to the second row of the pyramid, and like any pyramid, it will have less cans....exactly two. We find these two truths clearly expressed by Paul in our reading from his letter to the Romans. **Can 4: Genuine Love.**– not the lovely mushy sentimental love kind but the kind of love which honours God and blesses neighbours; costly love that goes beyond duty to sacrifice. **And can 5: Compassion.** Which is really **Love in ACTION.** Compassion means we are to bless, to contribute, to be hospital. To be humble. It means we never seek revenge, we forgive, we feed enemies if they are hungry, and give them water if they thirst. Such compassion is **transforming.** It places coals of fire upon their heads. Now that doesn't sound nice at all! Perhaps remembering tongues of fire on the heads of the disciples at Pentecost will help....those tongues of fire did not cause pain, but rather brought about transformation and great love as the Spirit-filled ones went on to share the Gospel. Perhaps it is something like we read in Isaiah Chapter 6: 5-7. A seraph brings a coal of fire to touch the unclean lips of Isaiah , thus purifying him, and giving him absolute assurance of God's pardon. Perhaps showing love to our enemies may stir some repentance in them, some remorse at their actions toward us in light of our kindness to them. Perhaps

those coals of fire are the source of new life. Yet even if they continue to be enemies, we must continue to love and bless them. Compassion always means that those who love God must love all that God loves. Words from a great Steve Bell song! Row Two is complete. Up to the next level we go....Can six stands for **Jesus**. Only Jesus. At the top of our pyramid. Remember last week's reading when Peter was granted the grace from God to KNOW the truth that Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed One, the Son of God. Jesus affirms that...and blesses Peter because God Himself revealed that truth to him. In that one blissful moment, Peter GOT it! And Jesus was right at the top of Peter's pyramid where He belonged.

But it didn't last. Jesus began to speak words about what will come next. He tells them that He is going to suffer, to die by execution on a cross, and to be raised up on the third day. Peter, hearing these words, just blurts out "Never, No Lord, don't be ridiculous. This must never happen to You".

Do you see that Peter is **arguing** with the One who he had just acknowledged as the Son of almighty God. Jesus was no longer alone on the top of the pyramid. Peter tried to wedge another can called PRIDE. In effect, Peter is saying "Yes, you are the Christ, but I know best how things should happen!" Then he tried to scrunch in another can called **FEAR**.. "Yes, You are the Christ, but if You are dead all will be lost. And then he tried yet another can called **CONTROL**. "You are the Christ, but how about doing things my way." And Jesus puts all that to an end saying, in our translation "**Get thee behind me Satan**". And Peter's pyramid comes crashing down.

Now Jesus' words sound harsh to our tender ears. Peter meant well didn't he? Satan? Really? Well, no...not really. Well, no, not really. This is an example of what happens in multiple translations...when Hebrew becomes Aramaic and then Greek and then Latin and then the King James version of the English Bible. And so on. The word we read as **SATAN** was in the original text

SCANDALON. And Scandalon means a Stumbling Block or a Snare Trap.

“Scandalon” was used whenever a person, activity or the presence of evil got in the way of the **Will of God**. Peter’s fear and pride and need to control were actually placing a **STUMBLING BLOCK** in the path of the One whom he loved.

I find it interesting that Peter’s name, given by Jesus, means **ROCK**. I’ve tripped over rocks a few times in my life. But rocks can also be stepping stones. When we place Jesus first and commit to following Him we will have to go where He goes, the way He goes, and we be and remain at where He is. It will not be easy. It will mean carrying our own cross. There will be pain. It will mean practicing genuine love and compassion. Through it all, whatever storms and griefs occur, we will indeed have the greatest joy, the fullest peace, and enduring purpose to our lives. How do I know? The Bible tells me so. Jesus came that we might have life, and have it abundantly, that the joy which was in Him, would also be in us. Like Peter, we may flounder and get things very wrong. Don’t despair! Remember that Jesus **didn’t** ever say “That’s your last chance, Peter”. Jesus later said “Peter, feed my sheep”. And it was Peter who preached that first sermon on the day of Pentecost which added 3000 sheep to the fledgling church. There is no end to God’s promise of mercy. If your pyramid crumbles, cry out to the God whose is **IAM**, He will come and save you, and set your feet back upon the rock. I close with a short poem I’ve used before in Scoops, just to challenge us again. It was written by Robert Lee Sharpe.

“Isn’t it strange that princes and kings,
And clowns that caper in sawdust rings
And common people like you and me are builders for eternity?
Each is given a bag of tools, a shapeless mass, a book of rules
And each must make ‘ere life has flown
A stumbling block or a stepping stone.” Amen!

Judie+

Prayer and Blessing for today:

Lord Jesus, we need you to be at the top of our life pyramid. We give to You our desires for total control, our pride, our fear, our confusion. You are the Light, the Way, the Truth and the Life. You hold all things in perfect unity and will bring peace to our hearts, comfort to our souls, and purpose to our journey as we keep looking up to see YOU! Thank You for your grace wherein there is never ever a last chance. Great is Your grace and Your faithfulness. Amen.

May the peace of God which passes all our understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ , and the blessing of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and upon you always. Amen!