

Readings for Tuesday the 25th Week of the Year

FIRST READING: Proverbs 21:1-6, 10-13

A reading from the Book of Proverbs:

Like a stream is the king's heart in the hand of the LORD; wherever it pleases him, he directs it. All the ways of a man may be right in his own eyes, but it is the LORD who proves hearts. To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. Haughty eyes and a proud heart— the tillage of the wicked is sin. The plans of the diligent are sure of profit, but all rash haste leads certainly to poverty. Whoever makes a fortune by a lying tongue is chasing a bubble over deadly snares. The soul of the wicked man desires evil; his neighbor finds no pity in his eyes. When the arrogant man is punished, the simple are the wiser; when the wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge. The just man appraises the house of the wicked: there is one who brings down the wicked to ruin. He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will himself also call and not be heard.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 119:1, 27, 30, 34, 35, 44

Guide me, Lord, in the way of your commands.

Blessed are they whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD.

Guide me, Lord, in the way of your commands.

Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous deeds.

Guide me, Lord, in the way of your commands.

The way of truth I have chosen; I have set your ordinances before me.

Guide me, Lord, in the way of your commands.

Give me discernment, that I may observe your law and keep it with all my heart.

Guide me, Lord, in the way of your commands.

Lead me in the path of your commands, for in it I delight.

Guide me, Lord, in the way of your commands.

And I will keep your law continually, forever and ever.

Guide me, Lord, in the way of your commands.

Gospel: Luke 8:19-21

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke:

The mother of Jesus and his brothers came to him but were unable to join him because of the crowd. He was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside and they wish to see you." He said to them in reply, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection for Tuesday the 25th Week of the Year

These are the briefest daily readings we have had in a long while. Both the readings from proverbs and Luke have ambiguities. Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings some of which are attributed to King Solomon. The reading for today comes from Solomon's collection.

I find the opening line of the reading from proverbs to be ambivalent. Is it just the heart of the king that is in God's hand? A stream meanders and its flow is inconsistent. How can meandering be directed? If God has our hearts in his hands, I wonder, does God truly guide our hearts like a stream? Streams can run dry. Is our choice to sin really God's doing? How can sin be part of God's plan? Where do we turn when we sin? Can our sins lead us to God? With God's grace, we turn to God for mercy and forgiveness.

The human heart meanders and runs dry. We can be loving and hateful. What is God's role? How does God direct our hearts? God is love. God is compassionate to all who turn to God. Who knows us despite our meandering? Who guides and accompanies us in times of trouble? Who forgives our sins? God never leaves us. We have arrived to this day by God's providence. We can know God's love and support that works through the love and support of those who are closest to us and those who give us what we need. We live, believe and love by God's grace.

Most of us want to see the ruin of the wicked. Wait a minute. If the wicked are sinners and come to ruin, I'm a sinner too. Is ruin what I can expect? Is there anywhere to turn? Whose mercy endures forever? Each of us is a sinner and has done wicked things. Each of us believes in Jesus. We can turn to God. Our mercy has limits. God's mercy has none. Our justice involves punishment. God's justice is forgiveness. When we come to ruin, we turn to God to forgive. When God looks at us in our arrogance or in ruins, what does God see? Each of us is made in God's image and likeness. God sees God in us. This insight of the in-dwelling presence of God in each person can lead us to see God in ourselves, our loved ones, our enemies and in those who hurt us. Life and relationships can be messy. God's eternal and unconditional love can be our mainstay and rudder.

The gospel has ambiguities on a couple levels. Why did Jesus ignore his own family? The scripture doesn't say. We know Mary his mother but who are these brothers? Jesus was God's only begotten son and Mary's only child. He didn't have any siblings. We, as Catholics believe that Mary was a virgin before, during and after Jesus birth. After him, there were no more. In the ancient Middle Eastern world, family could be an entire village. Most residents were related. A cousin could be considered a sibling. This was Jesus' family. Family for us, as Americans, is more restrictive. This event is included in the gospels of Matthew and Mark too. They follow the same pattern as Luke.

I don't like to focus on details of the story. To know who the brothers were is not the point of the passage. Jesus himself changed the focus from them to us. Here we are two thousand years later. Jesus' own words identify us as his family. We hear Jesus words, or at least read them. Hopefully the gospel inspires us to act in accord with Jesus words. Jesus has blessed us. We have become his mother, brothers and sisters. That's the most important lesson we can learn. Jesus is our brother. God, Jesus' father, is our father too. We are, in Jesus, all brothers and sisters. This passage is about our identity. Each of us is a beloved brother or sister with Jesus

and a beloved child of God. That identity leads us to action. Jesus blessed us with his words and commissioned us as disciples.

Our lives can be chaotic. Our actions can be hurtful. Sometimes we can live lonely lives. Our faith tells us that God never leaves us alone. God's guidance has brought us to today. We can glimpse eternity in simple ways. The blessing and call of Jesus has reached us to this day. With God's help we strive to give witness.

May God's blessing continue to grow and may our actions show Jesus.

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