



BIBLE FAITH SHARING, JANUARY 11, 2023

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (CA)

Isaiah 49:3,5-6

The LORD said to me: You are my servant, Israel, through whom I show my glory. Now the LORD has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb, that Jacob may be brought back to him and Israel gathered to him; and I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD, and my God is now my strength! It is too little, the LORD says, for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.



Reflection:

Have you ever been involved with a large chore or project, perhaps at home, school, work, or volunteering? You are assigned a particular task to do, when suddenly the person in charge tells you the task is too small, you are now going to be in charge of the entire project, which will affect many other people besides your own kind. All of today's readings talk about God assigning his faithful people to make his salvation known to all peoples and nations.

In today's first reading, the ancient Jewish people believed God revealed himself only to them, only to their religion, and only to their nation. But God is much bigger than any of our religious beliefs, and his love for us extends way beyond neighborhood boundaries or nations borders. God cannot be contained in one little box, meant only for those who believe what they believe or live where they live. Today is only one example, where God turns our human beliefs and ideas about him completely around, as he calls the prophet Isaiah to make God's plan of salvation known beyond the Jewish religion, beyond the borders of Israel, and even into the hearts and minds of all who are in darkness separated from God. We would do well both individually and as a church to leave our little God beliefs and ideas behind and trust in the much larger mystery of who God truly is and our call to be a light of his salvation to all.

Questions:

1. Any words in the reading get your attention? Any feelings? Thoughts? Images? Questions?
2. Have you ever been asked to take over a task or project that involved being around people you were not used to being with, or where you were taken out of your comfort zone? Explain.
3. We cannot do our best to serve God when we stay in our comfort zones. What comfort zone in your life would God (or is God) calling you out of?

Responsorial Psalm 40:2,4,7-10

R. (8a and 9a) Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

I have waited, waited for the LORD, and he stooped toward me and heard my cry. And he put a new song into my mouth, a hymn to our God.

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will. Sacrifice or offering you wished not, but ears open to obedience you gave me. Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not; then said I, "Behold I come."

R. Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will. "In the written scroll it is Prescribed for me, to do your will, O my God, is my delight, and your law is within my heart!"

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will. I announced your justice in the vast assembly;

I did not restrain my lips, as you, O LORD, know.

R. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection:

This short reading from Paul and Sosthenes' letter to the Corinthian church begins by Paul emphasizing his credential as an apostle of Jesus set apart, or as one called by God and strengthened by God's grace to fulfill that calling. Sosthenes, was a leader in the Jewish synagogue in Corinth believed to have become a Christian, as Paul affectionately refers to him as "our brother" (in faith). They remind the church of their calling and purpose, by God's grace, is to be a community also set apart in that they are united in their relationship with Christ and the holy mission of his salvation to all peoples. This message to the early Christian church is a message to us his church today. All believers in Christ, by God's grace, are called both individually and as a church community, for the purpose of fulfilling God's will and plan of salvation.

Questions:

1. Any words in the reading get your attention? Any feelings? Thoughts? Images? Questions?
2. Are you part of any group, club, or community? What does it mean for you?
3. Do you know what your purpose in life is? What purpose do you think God could have for you?
4. How does it make you feel or think knowing God has a purpose and plan for you?

Gospel of John 1:29-34

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."

Reflection:

The Scriptures are filled with much symbolism, including those representing God. Today's Gospel is one example. A dove is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist sees a dove descending on Jesus as he is baptizing him in the Jordan River. God revealed this to John as a sign he would know who the Messiah (Jesus, savior of the world) truly is. John's Gospel does not focus on the significance of the baptism, but on John the Baptists' mission to identify who the Messiah is and point others to Jesus so they can follow him. A lamb is another symbol used in the scriptures, often as a blood offering symbol of sacrifice to God. The religious people of those times were well aware of a lamb's sacrificial purpose. Those hearing John identify Jesus as both Messiah and lamb must have been a shock because it describes God becoming the sacrifice rather than being sacrificed to. God becoming a bloody sacrifice for the sake of people, especially sinners, was not the Messiah they were expecting. John the Baptist fulfilled his calling and purpose pointing people not to himself, but to Jesus, the one true God who saves us. All three of today's readings tell us God has a calling and purpose for all of us who believe and trust in him.

GODS
SIGN!



Questions:

1. Any words in the reading get your attention? Any feelings? Thoughts? Images? Questions?
2. If you were to pick a symbol that represented you, what would it be? Explain why you chose the symbol you did?
3. Why would John the Baptist calling Jesus the "Lamb of God" be shocking to the people of that time? What kind of a savior were the people expecting Jesus to be?
4. How does (or how could) your life point others to Jesus?