



Third Sunday in Ordinary Time- Word of God Sunday

By Leon P. Dodd, Jr

Good Evening!

1. Isiah speaks from Devastation to Hope
2. Jesus says; Repent; the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand
3. What does it mean to Drop our Nets to Follow Jesus
4. Importance of this Sunday in Ordinary Time?

Homily #64

From Isaiah

- We have the Northern Kingdom of Israel being invaded by the Assyrians
- Two Tribes: Zebulun and Naphtali were the first to fall to the Assyrian invasion
- The Prophet Isaiah speaks...
 - Words of : Anguish, Darkness, Gloom, and distress --- signal tough times are ahead
 - Think of hearing these words as your people, neighbors, best friends **who did** survive the war
 - Are now being lead, into captivity
- The Prophet now shifts his focus...
 - To a Royal Child who will be a sign of salvation, abundant Joy, and great rejoicing
 - People who have walked in darkness have seen a great light

Homily # 64

• From our Gospel today...

- Our Lord is returning from the time in the wilderness to his home in Galilee
- Prompting this move was the news of John the Baptist being taken into custody
- Jesus moves out to Capernaum to begin his public ministry
- Capernaum is on the northwest shore of Galilee
- It is a place of importance; since it is a First Century commercial fishing village
- It is close to a major Roman Road; [Via Maris] which connects Galilee with Syria to the North
- Matthew sees this move to Capernaum as significant, a fulfillment of the Isaiah Prophecy
- It is in this area where the first two tribes; Zebulun and Naphtali were exiled by the Assyrians in the 8th Century
- In accordance w/ Assyrian policies at the time, the most educated, wealthy, people of property; were deported and made servants by their captors
 - This left the land desolate and only the elderly, the poor, and sick remained

Homily # 64

- Given this bleak, gloomy, and grim history of this area we have Jesus choosing this place to begin His public ministry
- It suggests that the first Israelites to experience the darkness of conquest, exile, and devastation will now be the first to see the Light of God's goodness in the Messiah
- From devastation and ruins comes, renewal, restoration, Joy and most importantly – Hope
- What will Jesus do in Capernaum?
- Matthew uses many expressions in his Gospel Account; but the words “From that time on” is to make an important transition in his storyline
 - He uses it to start His public ministry
 - From that time on; Jesus began to Preach and say; “Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand”
 - We heard this from John the Baptist
 - We hear this when Our Lord sends out His disciples on their first public ministry
 - He is challenging His disciples; and us today; to be open to “Changing one's mind”
 - To turn around when we are not going in the correct direction
 - The Greek Word for this is Metanoia; To adopt a new way of thinking; a change of heart

- So, what does this mean for us today?

From Isaiah; we have the Prophet speaking about Anguish, Darkness, Gloom, and distress

- As the tribes Zebulun and Naphtali are devastated by the Assyrian invasion
- Yet, the prophet gives out hope; a Royal Child to come
- In today's Gospel Jesus begins his ministry in Capernaum; the very area where the first two tribes were overrun by the Assyrians
- Our Lord does not go to the synagogues or schools to find his disciples ---- no ---
- He goes to an industrial fishing village and finds "Simon and Andrew" & "James and John"
- Leaving family, the fishing business, all they knew in life, to follow a Man; they just met; announcing "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand"
- Why would they do such a thing?
- Let us just think for a moment... You are living in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali
- Your country has been taken over many times
- Your own people sent into exile and certain death
- The only strategic importance of the area is the Sea with its commercial fishing
- Why did they drop their nets?

- I believe they saw **Hope**; from this man; from Nazareth, who wanted to develop a personal relationship with His Friends

Well, **HOW can we do this today?**

Pope Francis issued an APOSTOLIC LETTER making this weekend; The WORD OF GOD SUNDAY

- Let us remember; that reading Sacred Scripture is important to all of us. There are many resources available: Bible in a Year programs, Pod Casts, The Word Among Us, Bible Studies etc.
- Jesus as the Living word of God showed His Apostles and Disciples how to have a personal relationship with God. He changed their lives...
- Jesus as the written Word of GOD wants to: “open our minds to the understanding of Scriptures” (*Lk 24:45*) and to change our lives as well
- The disciples; took a chance to develop their friendship with Our Lord from a place of desolation in Capernaum
- Brothers and Sisters in Christ; we may be living in some form of desolation [job/family/health issues]. We are perhaps CLINGING to our nets of despair...
- Perhaps Isaiah’s prophecy still speak words of Hope today
 - The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone.
 - You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing,
 - For the yoke that burdened them, the pole on their shoulder, and the rod of their taskmaster you have smashed
- They dropped their nets and followed Jesus. He is asking us to let go of our nets and to follow Him!