

Homily for the 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 2-3, 2019

Readings: Wisdom 11:22-12:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-2:2; Luke 19:1-10

Preacher: Susan Howard

As small as a grain of sand was Zacchaeus in the scheme of world affairs. No one really, just a small man caught up in the money-making schemes that everyone went along with. Just a guy who wanted to be bigger, more important, he wanted more for himself and his family. Much like any man or woman in this day and time who wants to get ahead, often by any means possible. But he must have felt rather unfulfilled, lacking in something that really mattered, empty and hollow. Something inside him knew he needed to be healed.

Much like the reading from the scripture about the woman suffering from the hemorrhage of blood for 12 years, here too, Jesus is just passing by, on his way through town, on the road. He is not standing on a soapbox screaming, "I am here to cure you!" The people who find him, have sought him out. They have risked being caught, seen in public, being in need of salvation. And the people, they need just a glimpse, just a touch of his cloak, a chance encounter to experience his healing power. And Jesus who loves everyone who God has made, has mercy on them, overlooks their sins and transgressions, their poverty and their illnesses so that each can experience his healing.

Two names are mentioned in the Gospel. Zacchaeus and the Sycamore. Jesus knew Zacchaeus by name. He called him. Just at the sound of his name he was healed! And I mention the sycamore, because it is a fig tree that is named. The fig tree is the ancient biblical tree that was first named as the tree of life and the tree of knowledge. Both are fitting here as Zacchaeus is both brought back to life—a life in union and communion with God as well as the knowledge of God and of right and wrong. And it cannot be lost on us, that the salvation of the whole human race took place on a tree. Just as Zacchaeus' life is restored, aren't all our lives restored by the death of Jesus on a tree?

And so we have the story of all of human kind right here before us. For each of us walking this path of life, trying to make a living, trying to get by...By any means...can we stop pretending that we have it all, stop chasing an elusive wholeness and admit we need the healing, loving, merciful power of Jesus to fill our lives? Stop for a moment; let Him call you by your name.

Brothers and sisters:

We always pray for you,
that our God may make you worthy of his calling
and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose
and every effort of faith,
that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you,
and you in him,
in accord with the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!