JMJ

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – B – 2021

We meet a couple of widows in the Scriptures today; a widow in Zarephath in the first Book of Kings and a widow in Jerusalem in the Gospel of Mark. What the two widows have in common is that they are poor, very poor. Something else they have in common is that they are remarkably generous. And because of their generosity, even in poverty, they both receive a reward. The first widow receives a miracle that saves her life and the life of her son. And the widow in the Gospel receives something even better, the praise of God Himself.

Why did God give us these stories today? Basically, it was for the same reason He gave us the Bible. It wasn’t for our entertainment, but for our instruction. These stories were given to us by God not just to impress us, but to motivate us. So what are they supposed to motive us to do? To be generous.

And so today God’s inviting us to step out in faith a little and to be generous. To be generous how? Financially? Yes, of course. But what I’d like to focus on today is being more generous *with our time*.

Rich people don’t have more time in the day than poor people do, and poor people don’t have less time in the day than rich people do. And yet none of us knows how much time we’ve got. There’s only so much time allotted to any of us in this life, and we don’t know for sure exactly what it is. Rich or poor, some die young and some die old.

So we have this precious gift of time, all of us, this same precious gift of time; and the question is, how should we spend it?

We can spend it selfishly, or we can spend it generously. Which of the two do you think is more pleasing to God? It’s to spend it generously, isn’t it, for others. Isn’t that how God spent all of His time here on earth – generously, for others? And we’re supposed to imitate Him. I’m not saying that we should become completely forgetful of ourselves and not take the time we need to recharge our batteries. But what I *am* saying is that, even then, we should never become forgetful of God or of others.

St. Francis de Sales has a lovely image of how we should journey through life. He says we should think of ourselves as a little child on a walk with his father: our hand in his hand; and with our other hand picking berries along the way, looking up at him from time to time to see if our occupations are pleasing to him.

It’s a beautiful image, and according to it we should never forget that God is walking with us every step of the way, wishing one of our hands to be constantly in His, and for us to be looking up at Him from time to time to see if what we’re doing is pleasing to Him. And what would please Him very much is to see us, most of the time, occupied in thinking of others.

That seems to me a very good way of spending the time that’s allotted to us in this life.

It may seem that we have very little time to spare, but God has been showing me recently how He is the Lord of time. How He can work miracles with it; making it stretch, for example. And His timing is perfect. It’s happened to me recently several times. And I’ll bet you’ve noticed something like it in your life, too: coincidences that are really God-incidences. Part of it involves accepting interruptions gladly, as though God had a better plan; and I’ve seen very often that He does.

We’re in His hands at every moment; and if we just follow Him, He’ll never lead us astray. He’ll bring into our lives, at just the time we need them, the inspirations, the opportunities, the persons, that we need in the fulfillment of our vocations in life.

His love is constant, His pacing is perfect. And though the way may sometimes be dangerous and difficult, all we need to do is to keep one of our hands in His and to look up at Him – frequently.