

19th Sunday
8/7/2022

VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

Every Sunday as we profess our faith we say, *I believe*. This includes *all things visible and invisible*. The creed is a statement of *what* we believe but also an expression *that* we believe, of that in which we place our trust.

The Epistle to the Hebrews describes faith as *evidence of things not seen*. In other words, what is visible and invisible. It goes on to describe the deep faith of Abraham. After that, this same chapter gives Who's Who of the Old Testament citing people like Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David and others who showed themselves children of Abraham not just by physical descent but by faith, by acting with faith. The faith of Abraham led him to action. It propelled him to leave what was familiar and to start out on a great adventure of faith, at the age of seventy-five.

In the Gospel, Jesus gives us examples of how we are to act in faith, how we are to live our faith in him. First of all, he says as he says so often, Do not be afraid. Fear closes us in on ourselves and in extreme cases leads to violence. The deeper our faith, the lesser our fear will be. Then Jesus says why, *because your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom*. If we share in the kingdom of God, everything else is secondary.

This in turn calls us to generosity, to give alms to work for a treasure that is eternal and not temporary, that is invisible but real. *Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be*. Like the weights of a grandfather clock, we follow that which we love. The question is whether it is a worthy treasure or not.

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that this world is the ultimate reality, that this is all that there is instead of remembering that this world is the lobby that is meant to lead us to the main hall of eternal life; the appetizer to the banquet of eternal life and that we shouldn't mistake that appetizer for the main course.

Third, Jesus says, *Gird your loins*. What exactly does that mean? At a time when people wore robes rather than pants, to gird your loins meant to pull up the lower portions of your garment around your waist to free you up to work and even run more efficiently. More broadly it means to be ready, ready to work in following Jesus and in faith to accept the demanding but freeing work of being a disciple. A

contemporary equivalent would be to roll up your sleeves or give it some elbow grease.

Fourth, Jesus says, *light your lamps*. This is another image of being ready, to not be left in the dark. But faith itself can be understood as a lamp that shines in the darkness. In the early Church St. Ambrose described faith as an invisible fire. It's something that allows us to see even though we can't see it. It's something that can warm us even if we don't see it.

All four of these points could be summed up in terms of responsibility. To not give way to fear; to treasure what is truly valuable, and to be vigilant, to be ready for the coming of Christ, not taking advantage of delays; not abusing alcohol, not mistreating other people but rather acting responsibly with what has been entrusted to us. This is all a call to responsibility. And Jesus reminds us that our level of responsibility leads to our level of accountability. *Much will be required of the person entrusted with much.*

In the end, our faith is our treasure and we are called to put it into action, to live our faith; to live lives of intentional faith, to live lives of intentional faith in every *little way*. We do this in many ways but again, four of these ways involve resisting fear by valuing that which is truly a treasure and by being ready with loins gird and lamp ready.

There are many ways we can keep our lamp of faith filled with oil. By prayer, by the word of God, by the encouragement of one another, by the example and prayers of the saints and by the sacraments. We do this especially by Reconciliation where we encounter in a very particular and personal way the mercy of God and through the Eucharist where Jesus continues to give himself to us; where he continues to feed us with his word and with his Body and Blood under the forms of bread and wine.

By our faith, may we prove ourselves to be children of Abraham by allowing our faith to propel us into action. Without fear, may we treasure what is truly valuable. May our hearts always be there as we wait with loins gird and with the lamp of faith burning brightly with lives of intentional faith, intentional action and lives of intentional faith where we live what we believe, in what is visible and invisible. Real Christian faith prompts to a deeper love of God and neighbor, in action.