

## EXPRESSIONS

Expressions. We say things. Different things. Different things at different times in our lives.

“Dang! I am good. I do all kinds of good things. I can show you. I’ll put my life up against anybody’s.”

Or.

“I’ve done a lot. Quite a bit actually. I’ve really done a lot. Frankly, I think I’ve done enough.”

Or.

“I don’t belong here. I shouldn’t be here. There’s no place for me here.”

Or.

“I don’t deserve this.” I don’t deserve this bad thing that has happened to me. I’m such a failure.”

Or.

“It’s too late. I am too far gone. There is no hope for me. I am beyond redemption.”

Our words express the thoughts in our minds and the hopes and feelings in our hearts. It is common enough to go too far in one direction or another. But that is often the way of life. Where do I stand in relationship to the Lord? How do I see myself? What is the feeling tone of my relationship with the Lord? Make no mistake--each of us has a relationship with Our Lord. It may be strong or weak. We may be clueless or very tuned in. But there is a relationship with the Lord. Why? Because that is who He is. That is what the Lord desires. The Lord has come to enter into a relationship with each one of us.

It is the Lord Himself who has taken the initiative, taken on our flesh, become one of us, shown us how to live in this world. It is the Lord who extended a hand in invitation to me a sinner that I can have a place in his kingdom, a place in his Father’s mansion. He wants me there. BUT. He will not force me to go there. It is an invitation. And if I accept on his terms he will get me ready to go there and truly belong.

In the story that Jesus tells of the two men praying in the Temple they are very different from each other. The first fellow really is a good person and really does do all the things he says and avoids doing all the things he mentions. His problem is not in the doing or avoiding. His problem is in the keeping score about how “good” he is. Notice, there is no credit given to the Lord and the abundance of grace that enables the good to be done. This man is a little too full of himself. He sees all in terms of what he personally has done and not what the Lord has empowered him to do. We can get like that sometimes.

This man notices a lot of things. He sees the tax collector and immediately he does his own mental calculation about how despicable that guy is. Notice there is an immediate comparison set up in his own mind. And what is the effect when he makes this comparison? Disdain and Distance. I am NOT like that guy. There is a world of difference between me and him. A chasm actually. (Remember the story of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus who dies and now rests on the bosom of Abraham? The rich man is in torture and seeks water for his tongue BUT there is a huge chasm between Abraham and the rich man. How did that chasm come to be? In the comparisons made by the rich man. He himself created the distance. The Lord desires us all to be together and to be one. United. But He won't force us to be.)

There is a world of difference between seeking to be one with or thinking I am better than. The second fellow has messed up his life but somehow he still hopes—at least to receive some mercy. He does not want justice. He won't fare so well. He asks for mercy and senses that the God in whom he believes is a merciful God besides being a just God. But here's the thing. Each of these guys needs the mercy and grace of God. Without the mercy and grace of God, they are lost. Us too. Without the mercy of God and without the grace of God we literally have no hope and no reason to hope. BUT here's the thing. There is no relationship with Christ without an encounter with Christ. Let me say that again. There is no relationship with Christ without an encounter with Christ. That is why he left himself to us in the sacraments. So that in Baptism, in Confirmation, in Reconciliation, in Eucharist we can meet him and encounter him as life-giving and strengthening, and forgiving and nourishing.

Jesus is God's Incarnate and Beloved Son who came to extend an invitation to live forever in the Kingdom of God despite our sins. The invitation was offered in his passion and death. It is for each of us to accept the invitation Will I? Will you? Yes. We will. Yes. We have. We have let him in. We have welcomed Him into our lives. We will again today in communion. Go to meet him in the sacrament of reconciliation. Let him cleanse you and then clothe you with a white garment of grace as he says right to your face. "Welcome into my Father's house. You are welcome here. You are wanted here. I want you to believe that you belong here. It is my Father and my gift to you. Live in our Spirit." Yes. Let's do that.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.