

GOOD LUCK WITH THAT!

Luck. Good luck. Bad luck. Luck. What are your thoughts about luck? Do you use the word as part of your everyday vocabulary? As your kids go off to play a game. Do you say: “Good luck.” When a fellow employee tells you they are going in to ask for a raise, do you say: “Good luck with that?” When you tell about narrowly escaping a car accident, do you say: “I was really lucky?” When they prepare to flip the coin at the beginning of tomorrow’s Super Bowl. Listen to hear if the referee says: “Good luck.”

What is luck? Something that happens by chance. Something out of our control. Something with no intentionality behind it. Luck is a wish for a favorable outcome or hope for a good experience. It is a wish for success with a difficult task. But is it real? Is there some invisible force at work in our world which had a role in determining outcomes?

Along with luck we hear about how there is this thing called serendipity where things just work in our favor. Or happenstance. Frankly, I do not believe in luck or serendipity or happenstance. At all. Well, what do I believe in? Grace. And blessing. Grace is everywhere just as invisible as luck. Grace is God’s relational presence in our world whether we recognize its working or not. Blessing is God’s favorable assistance and the effect of grace in our lives.

Jesus speaks of blessing in the gospel today. Blessed are the poor. Blessed? Well who needs that kind of blessing we think. Blessed are the hungry, the sorrowful, the hated. Really? Blessed. What are we missing? Why would Jesus call them blessed? For an answer, look more closely at the person of Jesus himself as he is presented and portrayed in the gospels. Is he not poor? Is he not among the hungry—hungering not just for food but for souls? For the transformation of lives, for the healing of wounds? Is he not hated and despised? Does that not result in his being falsely accused on trumped up charges and then executed in plain view of the populace to send a message? Don’t mess with the Romans. Don’t mess with the Religious authorities. If you do you will pay the very dearest of all prices. Your life.

But Jesus is not afraid. He challenges both religious and civil authority. He proclaims the truth. He brings hope. He offers forgiveness to those who recognize and admit their sins and seek to be set free. And yes, he does pay the ultimate price. So much for that. Until Easter Sunday of course. He is not to be found in the tomb where they buried his body. His burial clothes were there but not him. This is what Saint Paul refers to in the passage for today's second reading. If Jesus is not raised from the dead, then our faith is in vain. However, our faith tells us that he is raised. Those who saw him die, also saw him alive—afterwards. Ate with him. Prayed with him. Spoke with him. Touched him. And they saw him ascend to the Father.

What is just luck that Jesus was raised? My friends, our world is shot through with grace-- now. There are signs of grace everywhere, if only we stop to look. If only we believe. Do we believe that? Do we place our trust in God? That is the question Jeremiah asks in the first reading. Do you really trust God? Do you put your concerns in God's arms? Do you really entrust everything to the Lord? Yourself? All your relationships? All your responsibilities? All your tasks? Your children? Your health? Your livelihood? Here is what I have found. The more I entrust of myself and my life to God, the more signs of grace I see every day. There is no luck. There is no need for a thing called, luck. There is only grace. And the surest sign of grace is the resurrection life of Jesus. Found in our midst this day—in the Eucharist. He is here. Grace prevails. Grace wins. Love triumphs over all. And therefore has won the right to our full-hearted trust. Despite any appearances to the contrary.

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