

Sat 17th Jul

Mt 12, 14-21

At this the Pharisees went out and began to plot against him, discussing how to destroy him. Jesus knew this and withdrew from the district. Many followed him and he cured them all but warned them not to make him known. This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

'Look! My servant whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul delights, I will send my Spirit upon him, and he will present judgement to the nations; he will not brawl or cry out, his voice is not heard in the streets, he will not break the crushed reed, or snuff the faltering wick, until he has made judgement victorious; in him the nations will put their hope.'

Jesus lives exactly as God has described him – he does not argue and fight for with the Pharisees for victory. Rather, he silently carries out his mission of love and healing among the people. He does not only interact with important and rich people; Jesus was also a friend of the poor and marginalised. This is the person whose life delights our God! Do we ever wonder what we can do to please God? Our answer lies in Jesus! When we look at his life, his attitude, his behaviour, we can see the way to the heart of God. To please God, we can imitate Jesus' life – to bring words of comfort to those who are hurting, to give mercy to those who wrong us, strength to those who are doubting, and hope for all who are waiting for lasting justice and joy.

It is hard to walk away without getting the last word in when we are wronged, to keep giving ourselves to people who may not appreciate our sacrifice or to forgive over and over the ones who hurt us with their words and actions. But this is the way we can bring the unconditional love of God to the people we live among. When we live with the same mission as Jesus, we will hear God telling us, *'You are my beloved, in whom my soul delights.'*

Sun 18th Jul

Lk 10, 38-42

In the course of their journey he came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said,



'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her.'

Do we find ourselves like Martha sometimes, welcoming Jesus into our hearts, but being too busy to be with him? Life in our modern world is indeed hectic, we need to work hard to earn a living, play hard to unwind and even unwinding can be taken to higher levels, with more and more ways to indulge ourselves available in the market.

Jesus is not telling us to be lazy, rather he says to us the same words he spoke to Martha, *'You worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one.'* The only thing we need to be concerned with is keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, our hearts close to his. When we live daily in close relationship with him, all other concerns will fall into place. Do we dare to trust in Jesus' assurance – to surrender all our worries and stresses, to turn our eyes from our struggles and our dreams to look at Jesus instead?

When we find the faith and courage to turn from our fretting and busyness, we will find that Jesus' words are true, that we really do not need so many things in order to enjoy peace, joy and love in our lives.

Dear Jesus, help me make time and space in my day to sit with you and listen, so that I can understand what is truly essential in my life.

Mon 19th Jul

Mi 6, 1-4, 6-8

'With what shall I enter Yahweh's presence and bow down before God All-high? Shall I enter with burnt offerings, with calves one year old? Will he be pleased with rams by the thousand, with ten thousand streams of oil? Shall I offer my eldest son for my wrong-doing, the child of my own body for my sin? 'You have already been told what is right and what Yahweh wants of you. Only this, to do what is right, to love loyalty and to walk humbly with your God.'

'...Only this, to do what is right, to love loyalty and to walk humbly with your God.'

This is all God asks of us. Yet often, we complicate our lives trying to do many things for God. We work extra hard so we can donate to the poor, we join church groups, we do volunteer work, we start prayer groups at our workplace, our school, our neighbourhoods, etc.

We are so busy giving things and doing things for God, that we miss what He really wants from us – relationship. Our God desires for us to allow Him into our daily lives, to be our God – loving, guiding and teaching us. When we live our days in relationship with God, we will understand how our lives can be pleasing to Him. We do not have to try to please

God on our own strength and understanding. That will only tire us out and drive us away from love.

Because God does not always grant us what we ask for, we think that doing God's will bring us pain and loss. But God's only desire for us is that we find fulfilment and joy in our lives! There is no need to fear that God inflicts pain on us just to teach us to obey. Rather, we can approach Him with the faith of a little child going to his father, knowing that He does only what is best for the child.

Father, teach me how my life can be pleasing to you.

Tues 20th Jul

Mt 12, 46-50

He was still speaking to the crowds when suddenly his mother and his brothers were standing outside and were anxious to have a word with him. But to the man who told him this Jesus replied, 'Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?' And stretching out his hand towards his disciples he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'

"Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Jesus does not say this to make his mother feel sad. This is the way Jesus defines his family – his most basic identity. The first person who showed Jesus how it is to be faithful to God's will is his mother, Mary.

Does it ever feel like the people who share our passions, our perspectives, etc, seem to be much closer to us than our family members? This is what Jesus was referring to in today's passage. The passion of Jesus' life is to do the will of the Father, to be His presence in our midst. This work took up all of Jesus' energy and attention, and he relates with those who follow the same path as intimately as he would with his family.

Why? Because only when we are making the same journey will we experience the same struggles, the rejections, the moments of weakness, the consolation, the grace, the silent voice that tells us we are loved... When we share all these experiences with Jesus, then he is able to relate with us as a brother, a sister, a comrade-in-arms. It may not always be easy to choose the way of Love, of surrendering, of trusting, but we know that we are never alone!

Dear Jesus, when it is difficult to choose God's will, help me to look at your life and to draw strength from your example.

Wed 21st Jul

Jer 1, 4-10

The word of Yahweh came to me, saying:

'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I appointed you as prophet to the nations.' I then said, 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord Yahweh; you see, I do not know how to speak: I am only

a child!' But Yahweh replied, 'Do not say, "I am only a child," for you must go to all to whom I send you and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of confronting them, for I am with you to rescue you, Yahweh declares.'

Then Yahweh stretched out his hand and touched my mouth, and Yahweh said to me: 'There! I have put my words into your mouth. Look, today I have set you over the nations and kingdoms, to uproot and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.'

'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you...'

God is the only person who can say this to us, because He forms us in the very way He wants us to be. We are not accidental beings, but formed deliberately, lovingly, the way we are by our God. When we are dissatisfied with our face, our hair, our bodies, our talents, etc, let us remember that God is very pleased with the way He has created us.

So often, when we see people in need, we feel inadequate to help, to speak out. But it is God who makes us see the needs, the hurts, the hungers of the people around us. He tells us not to run away from giving His word, His love, His comfort to them. This may require our time, our patience, our pride, even our money and possessions...

Offering God's way as the Way to happiness, to fulfilment, we will face resistance, because His way is so contrary to the ways of the world. It requires our faith and humble submission to God. This is not the popular way in our meritocratic society, that wants to earn all we need and desire.

God tells us not to fear the rejection, the cynicism, etc that we will face. We can put our trust in Him to guide and sustain us as we remain faithful to our mission of sharing His love with the people who need Him.

Help me see the need of the people around me, Lord. And give me the courage and wisdom to offer your love to them.

Thur 22nd Jul

Jn 20, 1-2, 11-18

Memorial of Mary Magdalene



It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb... But Mary was standing outside near the tomb, weeping. Then, as she wept, she stooped to look inside, and saw two

angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, the other at the feet. They said, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' 'They have taken my Lord away,' she replied, 'and I don't know where they have put him.' As she said this she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not realise that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him.' Jesus said, 'Mary!' She turned round then and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbuni!' -- which means Master. Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' So Mary of Magdala told the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and that he had said these things to her.

Mary of Magdala sparks the imagination of many fiction writers because of her love for Jesus. Mary is unashamed of calling Jesus her 'Lord', her 'Master', her 'Teacher', even when he had been treated as a criminal and condemned by their religious and civil leaders. Her love for Jesus is not affected by what others say and do. Even when the other disciples hid themselves in fear, Mary went out to search for Jesus.

How does Mary grow to love Jesus so deeply, so boldly? Mary learns to love Jesus from the way she sees him loving her. Jesus touches Mary's life with his teachings, his selfless and untiring love, his unconditional generosity. She sees the boldness with which Jesus speaks against corruption, hypocrisy, apathy and greed. Mary witnessed Jesus' courage, in loving his flock even on the cross. He never gave them up. Jesus is Mary's model of love.

Throughout history, we have been given many great lovers of Jesus, from whom we can draw courage and direction. Looking at the lives of others, may we also grow into *Lord, strengthen my faith so that I can bring others to know your love. Grant me wisdom so that I can recognise you at work in the people around me.*

VERBUM DEI MISSIONARIES
 2A Bury Road Singapore 119820
 Tel/Fax: 62740251
 Email: verbumdeispore@yahoo.com.sg
<http://www.verbumdeisingapore.org>



Fri 16th Jul

Mt 12, 1-8

At that time Jesus went through the cornfields one Sabbath day. His disciples were hungry and began to pick ears of corn and eat them. The Pharisees noticed it and said to him, 'Look, your disciples are doing something that is forbidden on the Sabbath.' But he said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he and his followers were hungry – how he went into the house of God and they ate the loaves of the offering although neither he nor his followers were permitted to eat them, but only the priests? Or again, have you not read in the Law that on the Sabbath day the Temple priests break the Sabbath without committing any fault? Now here, I tell you, is something greater than the Temple. And if you had understood the meaning of the words: Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the blameless. For the Son of man is master of the Sabbath.'

Today, Jesus reminds us again not to make rules and laws our gods. He alone is our God, and laws only serve to help us know His love and to love Him. The Pharisees are focused only on the law, on external compliance, thinking that was the way to win God's favour. But they miss the point!

Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice...

These are the words that God speaks to us, from the Old Testament to the New. In His own ways, God shows us that He is merciful and forgiving. Created in His image, we also have the same capacity to be merciful to our family, friends, neighbours, workmates...

Towards people who have hurt us personally, or those who have embarked on self-destructive ways, we can bring the healing mercy of God to them. We do this by imitating Jesus, by accepting the people and extending friendship and love to those that the world rejects.

Lord, may my life be pleasing to you. Help me grow more and more into your image.