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Homily A16-Track 2
Isaiah 51:1-6, Ps 138, Romans 12:1-8, Matt 16:13-20

THE MEASURE OF OUR DAYS

*Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes ...
moments so dear.*

Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes.

How do you ... measure a year? ...

How do you measure the life of a woman or a man?

So asks Jonathan Larson's famous song *Seasons of Love*, from the play *Rent*. It goes on to suggest all sorts of measures: days, sunsets, miles, laughter, tears, burned bridges. Whether we are optimists or pessimists, hedonists or stoics, all of us have desires, and measures, to make sense of how we spend our days. We are all looking for that through-line that ties our life together, that string, which reaches back into our past and forward into our future.

Some people say that one of the differences between Eastern and Western religions is that Western religion, the Abrahamic traditions, are pretty linear in the way we look at existence; while the Eastern ones are more cyclical. Certainly in the Bible there seems to be a very clear beginning, middle and end to our story, from Genesis to Apocalypse. But I don't think it is that simple. You see, the Bible doesn't just measure life or time chronologically. It may appear linear, or a work in progress, but it is not the usual linear measurement. Because the reference point, or starting point is not in our past; it is in our future. The scriptures don't take stock of things from where we began. They measure from a FUTURE reference point. The reference point is not in Genesis. It is in the future. It is in what theologians call the Parousia, Judgment Day, or these days: the Omega Point. The reference point, the measure of our days, is not in

our past, it is in our PURPOSE. We are not measuring from the number one. We are measuring from infinity, eternity. And so the through-line of a Christian life is a proleptic one, not a chronological one. That means our frame of reference is the future we are aiming for, not the past from which we started.

So, the scriptures today start out with a stark suggestion for the measure of our days: *God's Justice*. The prophet Isaiah says this:

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn. Listen ... and give heed ...for ... my justice (is) ... light ... hope. ...and ... salvation ... (Isaiah 51:1-6)

The rock from which we were hewn is not some cave humanity emerged from. It is the faith from which we set our course. THAT is the measure of our days. And for Isaiah that through-line is God's justice. This is not the same as human justice. In another place Isaiah even says that God's ways are not our ways. Nevertheless, Isaiah is saying that human righteousness is meant to aim for God's perfect justice. If history is any guide, when we don't aim for the higher justice, we will always settle for LESS than justice. So the measure of how well we treat one another is never how we did it in the past, but rather how we WANT to do it in the future.

We are living through a time of such corruption that the casualties are all around us. But so are the opportunities to reach for a better way. And if we do, we wouldn't be on our own. We would find ourselves in the company of all the justice-seekers of history. We would find ourselves in the company of Christ, in whom Peter saw something, however fleetingly, of God's perfect justice. That sight, that intuition, that FAITH, is what Jesus called the rock on which he would build the Church.

Toward the end of Larson's song, he offers one more suggestion for the measure of our days. He asks: *How about love?* Indeed. When all is said and done, love is the rock from which we were hewn, and it is the rock upon which we can build a life. But just like God's justice, if we don't aim for Christ's love, we will NEVER hit it. If God's love and justice are not our objective, they will never be our purpose.

And so as we aim for that Omega Point, for our true purpose, let us pray with the psalmist today:

*Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe, O God;
You will make good your purpose for me ... do not abandon the
works of your hands.*

(Psalm 138:8-9)