**“God’s Ways”**

All our readings point us to how God’s ways are so different from our ways if we do not follow His commandments. If we follow His commandments, we will know His ways. His commandments are about love of Him and our neighbor. God is so different from us that it is impossible for us to find words and image to describe Him. What our human nature thinks is fair and just, are things that we think of that leads to immediate gratification. Whereas, with God, He is always are about His desire that we spend eternity with Him.

Our minds are so deficient or puny to understand God’s ways unless we receive from Him the grace to know Him with our inner minds. However, we have limitations in fully knowing Him. When we receive His grace we will be able to do His will. And when we embrace God’s will, we will be assured of not only His justice but also His unparalleled justice.

God is always in search of us and He desires that we come to know Him and know His ways. We can find evidence of these in the Psalms and through the preaching of His prophets whom He sends so they could reveal His ways and His will to us. He also sent His Son to us for the same reasons. His Son used parables to tell us about the Kingdom of His Father. Through those parables, we could have a picture of His ways and know His will.

In our first reading, through Prophet Isaiah, God told us to follow Him in His ways while we can still find Him because we might be too deep in sin that the devil will completely take over our lives. It will be too late to find Him or follow in His ways when we are lost in the world. It is only when we are alive in this world that our destiny could be aligned with His will and we will follow Him and His ways. Our thoughts are about things that are passing while God’s ways are about things that last for eternity.

That is why God used the analogy of the distance between heaven and earth to describe how different His thought and His ways are above our thoughts and ways. However, when we seek God, we would always find Him in the recess of our hearts. Despite our limitations, doing God’s will, would lead us to produce good fruit. On the other hand, following our own will, will lead us to produce rotten fruits. But once we turn back to Him, He will nurture us with His grace and we will start to produce good fruits that would lead us to eternal life with Him.

In the letter of St. Paul to the Philippians, Paul talked about the conflict he was having between staying in this world versus going to heaven to be with Jesus. Otherwise, Paul was saying he was not afraid to die because in living, his ways and thoughts which were aligned with God’s ways would be an example for others to follow. His ways and thought would benefit the people assigned to him to shepherd. Because his ways and thoughts would magnify or reveal the ways and thoughts of God to them and to us who would read about his life in Christ.

Paul chose God’s ways and was not afraid to leave this world for the continuation of a new life for eternity in heaven. However, Paul was not thinking about himself even though to him that would be better. Instead he was concerned about the salvation of other souls. We too would make the same choice as Paul did if we follow the will of God. We will not be afraid of death and we would rejoice that we would be going to meet God and see Him as He is. We would rejoice that we would spend eternity with our loved ones and all the heavenly Angels and Saints.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus used the parable of the workers in the vineyard to explain to us some of the ways God’s ways are different from our ways. The owner of the vineyard is God. The workers hired at dawn are the Israelites who were the recipient of the first covenant. The workers hired at the last hour of the day are the Gentiles who were not part of the first covenant. The vineyard is the kingdom.

God in His generosity in this parable paid the same wages to all the workers no matter what time they started picking grapes in the vineyard. We heard that those who were hired first, behaved exactly how all humans would react. They felt that being paid the same wages as the last workers who were first paid, was a slap in the face and was an unjust act. That is why Jesus said the first shall be last and the last shall be first.

But God explained to them that He did not cheat them out of what He promised to pay them. He paid them exactly what He promised He would pay them. This parable should remind us of the parable of the prodigal son. The older brother reacted similarly as the first hired workers. He was jealous of how their father embraced his brother the lost son.

Sometimes, we use our human experience wrongly to form an impression about how God works. Instead of the first hired workers to express happiness for the last hired grape pickers, they were jealous of them just as the older son was jealous of the party the father gave in honor of the son that repented and returned home. Jealousy does not fulfill the love of neighbor. It only leads to hate. Our mission is to strife to love as God loves.

The parable as applicable to the Israelites and the Gentiles point us to the fact that though the Israelites received the first covenant, so has God granted the Gentiles a new covenant through Jesus. What God promised to the Israelites is the same thing He has promised to the Gentiles who have been invited to the kingdom later. The promise is our salvation and eternal life with God in heaven.

How do we apply this parable to ourselves in this current life? We can look at the different gifts God has given to each and every one of us for the building of the Church the body of Christ. Do we react with jealousy over the gift others received from the Holy Spirit or do we rejoice with them that God has given them the gifts to use for the building of His Church? Each an every one of us has received some gift from the Holy Spirit. It is up to us to use those gifts for the building of the Church. It is then that we share in the mission of Christ of spreading His Gospel.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us give thanks to God for the special gift He has given us and rejoice with others for the gift God has given them.