

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time – August 24, 2025 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 66:18-21

Thus says the LORD: I know their works and their thoughts, and I come to gather nations of every language; they shall come and see my glory. I will set a sign among them; from them I will send fugitives to the nations: to Tarshish, Put and Lud, Mosoch, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have never heard of my fame, or seen my glory; and they shall proclaim my glory among the nations. They shall bring all your brothers and sisters from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots, in carts, upon mules and dromedaries, to Jerusalem, my holy mountain, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their offering to the house of the LORD in clean vessels. Some of these I will take as priests and Levites, says the LORD.

Psalm: Ps 117:1, 2

R. (Mk 16:15) Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.

Praise the LORD, all you nations;
glorify him, all you peoples!

R. Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.

For steadfast is his kindness toward us,
and the fidelity of the LORD endures forever.

R. Go out to all the world and tell the Good News.

Second Reading: Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

Brothers and sisters, You have forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as children:

"My son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every son he acknowledges."

Endure your trials as "discipline"; God treats you as sons. For what "son" is there whom his father does not discipline? At the time, all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it.

So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet, that what is lame may not be disjointed but healed.

Gospel: Luke 13:22-30

Jesus passed through towns and villages, teaching as he went and making his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough. After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, then will you stand outside knocking and saying, 'Lord, open the door for us.' He will say to you in reply, 'I do not know where you are from.' And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' Then he will say to you, 'I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!' And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out. And people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God. For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Maybe you remember the parable which Jesus told two weeks ago. There was a man knocking on a friend's door at midnight, wanting to borrow some bread. The friend yelled back, do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything. Jesus responds: I tell you, if he does not get up to give him the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence. I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. Doesn't it feel good knowing that constant prayer will get the door opened? Well, hold that feeling back for a while and look at this Sunday's Gospel. Here again someone is knocking on the door late at night. But they receive nothing. The master of the house says, I do not know where you are from. The one(s) knocking replies: "but we ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets." Look carefully at those words: clearly, the askers have to be mere casual acquaintances, if that. Something like this: we liked what you did, and now we want more! The master says, I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers! Ouch. What about "ask and you shall receive"? As if to rub it in, Jesus says, There will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see the saved ones— Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets—looking down from heaven while you are being cast out!

What is going on here? Is Jesus just in a bad mood? We know that he is "making his way to Jerusalem" as he tells this parable, walking straight into the crucifixion, so maybe he is just anxious. Yet notice that, in last week's parable, even though the owner opens the door just to get the noise stopped, the interruption was being caused by a friend—albeit a rude one—who would not stop asking for what he needed. That parable told us to keep asking God, our friend, for what we need, even though he may be a bit grumpy. But, in the parable for this Sunday, the people outside are obviously not friends and in fact they have no relationship at all to the master of the house. This parable states that they knew about him only from parties and from the streets. They heard him preaching but they did nothing. They did not come to his house at a reasonable hour and begin a friendship. No amount of midnight knocking will make up for it. What is our lesson? That God keeps the door open long beyond what anyone would expect, all the way to the end. But if we are too busy partying and dancing, then finally there is nothing he can do. He has to accept our decision to stay outside. The message? Get to know God now. Do not delay till you find yourself at the end of your life at heaven's gates and have nothing to show for yourself.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. From the beginning it was God's plan to save all humankind. Can you help others in this plan? Are people being excluded? Can you think of anything your parish or the Church as a whole could do to be more inclusive? Welcome immigrants? Fight racism?
2. From what you know of the lives of the saints, did/does God handle the saints with "kid gloves"? What about you—how does God treat you? Would you like softer treatment? What is the relationship between God's love and hardships along the spiritual path?
3. "We ate and drank in your company." Is membership in a particular way of life an automatic "opening" of the narrow gate? Is this narrow gate an entrance for all humankind? Can people of all religions receive grace? If God is always creating you, moment to moment, do you think God ever stops offering you moments of grace?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful to unite in a single purpose, grant your people to love what you command and to desire what you promise, that, amid the uncertainties of this world, our hearts may be fixed on that place where true gladness is found. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen