



August 21, 2022

## Twenty-first Sunday of Ordinary Time

*"And People will come from the east and the west and the north and the south and will recline at table in the Kingdom of God."*

Luke 12:49



Dear Friends;

After a period of rapid globalization many people have felt left behind. And we are experiencing a backlash from those left behind. The backlash has taken a decidedly negative shape in ethnocentrism, nationalism, and isolationism. People are fighting over the future direction of humanity and their vision of the future. It comes down to do we have an inclusive or exclusive vision for humanity. This discussion is not new.

A collection of rabbinic laws known as the Mishnah were applied to daily Jewish life. The Mishnah reflects a belief among first century Palestinian Jews that *"all Israelites have a share in the world to come."* (Sanhedrin 10:1). In contrast the Pharisees of Jesus's time reflect a Judean tradition that only a *"remnant"* would be saved. *"This age the Most High has made for many, but the age to come for few"* (4 Ezra 8:1). Therefore, the listeners of Jesus want to know, how many Jews would have a share in the Kingdom that he was proclaiming?

Instead, Jesus does not give a direct answer to the question. He emphasizes the need for strenuous effort to overcome the expected traffic jam of all kinds of unworthy people trying to squeeze through the gate into the Kingdom. What makes them unworthy? They have heard the preaching and teaching of Jesus and they may have even had dinner with Jesus, but they have not put into practice the radical compassion of God. They still want to judge who is included and who is excluded.

The unworthy do not share the expansive inclusivity of the Prophet Isaiah of our first reading. *"I come to gather nations of every language; they shall come and see my glory."* God will not be circumscribed by us. God is not solely contained by Catholics, Christians, or the United States of America. But God is in Iraq, Russia, and Afghanistan. God works in Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus, and even atheists. God is found in liberals, centrists, and conservatives. The call of Jesus is to recognize the presence of God in all people and all things.

When God created everything, he kept repeating that *"It is good."* Sadly, humans have repeatedly refused to accept God's judgment of goodness. We have place divisions between God and us. We have divided humanity into *"them and us,"* *"America first"* means everyone else last. The struggle we are experiencing now is between those who recognize the goodness of the whole and those who think only a few are worth saving.

Fr Michael Himes was a theologian and popular professor. He writes,

*"Salvation is the story of God's entry into the world in order to reaffirm [his] first judgment, which is that God has looked at us and seen that we are good. This time we must believe and accept the judgment. We are saved when we agree with God that being human is good. Salvation is not the story of God's rescuing us from an evil universe but of God's coming to live in the universe with us so that we finally recognize how good the universe is."*

Will there be many saved? Yes, a whole universe!

Peace,

*Fr Ron*

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