

**4th Sunday, yr. B, Xavier Church,  
Deut. 18, 15-20; Ps. 95; 1 Cor., 7, 32-35; Mk. 1, 21-28**

Ward Biemans SJ

Dear brothers and sisters, in the first reading, Moses announces that the Lord our God will raise up a prophet, to whom the people must listen. We believe that this word of Moses will be fulfilled by the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. But where does the prophetic aspect of Jesus' glad tidings actually lie?

As you will be aware, a true prophet says certain things about the future, which then turn out to be true. Now Jesus said very clear things about the future. First of all: at the beginning of His proclamation, He said: the Kingdom of God is at hand. This Kingdom of God has indeed come in the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a kingdom of justice, peace and joy. So it is already among us, but there is also a future aspect to the Kingdom of God: it will come in glory, namely at Christ's return.

The Lord has not left us orphaned until his Kingdom comes. This is the second future aspect of Christ's glad tidings: his announcement that the Holy Spirit will be poured out on us. That Spirit dwells in us by the grace of our Baptism and Confirmation, but make no mistake: the world is not receptive to the Spirit. In the Gospel according to John, we read that the Spirit will teach us everything and remind us of everything Jesus said. But the peace Jesus announces us through the promise of the Holy Spirit is different from the peace the world gives.

This is also a third aspect of the message about the future Jesus has in store for us: there will be conflicts between people and between nations, He says; there will be famines, diseases and earthquakes, now here, then there. But the Good News of the Kingdom will be proclaimed all over the world for a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

So the proclamation of the Kingdom of God has something hopeful in it as well as disaster. But it becomes very clear through the actions of Jesus that his power is greater than the forces of evil.

The unclean spirits are unable to hold persons in their grip any longer when Jesus speaks to them. Jesus teaches with authority and therefore, by His authority received from the Father, He is able to heal people from the power of evil.

Finally, a word on what this joyful Message can mean for us and especially for our social life. The key to this is in St Paul's second reading. There he talks about married life and about those who are unmarried. People who live as single can devote

themselves completely to the Lord. With marriage, different conflicting interests may arrive: attention can become divided between worldly matters and attention to one another. But of course, Paul adds, marriage is in itself a good thing. Today, many young people are afraid to marry, to enter into a union for life. They are put off by the many divorces they see around them, by the high burdens, and so on. The Church encourages young people in courtship to seriously consider what marriage might mean for them. The Church also offers preparation for those who want to get married and start a family.

And this is also necessary. St Paul points out a risk of a marriage relationship that is of all times: that one becomes so engrossed in worldly affairs that attention to God slackens. It is important not to misunderstand the apostle here: of course he encourages husband and wife to care for each other. But at the same time he wants to encourage the single, celibate people by saying that they can keep their attention wholly on the Lord and can therefore be content with their present state of life. And those who are married, he urges to keep in mind that God is the source of their love for each other. Praying together gives strength to married life, this is a wisdom of many centuries of experience.

So let us pray, dear brothers and sisters, that we can continue to trust fully in the Lord Jesus, whatever state of life we find ourselves in. Jesus has overcome the power of evil and He still offers us His help, today. Amen.