

To Believe in Jesus Alone



“Jesus leads the Way!”

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Jos 24:1-2,15-17,18)

¹Joshua gathered together all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, summoning the elders, leaders, judges, and officers of Israel. When they stood in ranks before God, ²Joshua addressed all the people: “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: In times past your ancestors, down to Terah,^a father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River* and served other gods. ^{15ⁿ} If it is displeasing to you to serve the LORD, choose today whom you will serve, the gods your ancestors served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are dwelling. As for me and my household, **we will serve the LORD.**”

¹⁶But the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods. ¹⁷For it was the LORD, our God, who brought us and our ancestors up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. He performed those great signs before our very eyes and protected

us along our entire journey and among all the peoples through whom we passed. ¹⁸At our approach the LORD drove out all the peoples, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. Therefore **we also will serve the LORD**, for he is our God.”

THE FOCUS: Service to the Lord

COMMENTARY

- The text belongs to the last part of the book of Joshua (22:1—24:33):
1st part: Conquest of Canaan (1:1—12:24);
2nd part: Division of the Land (13:1—21:45).
- The part in which our text belongs is entitled “Return of the Transjordan Tribes and Joshua’s Farewell (NAB).
- Loyalty check
- Joshua, leader after Moses
- Shechem, north of Jerusalem
- Beyond the River = beyond Euphrates and Tigris
- Amorites = Western Mesopotamian
- The God whom they should serve:
God of Israel, the liberator God, the wonder worker God, the protector, co-traveller.

REFLECTIONS

It is good, once in a while, to check the God we are worshipping.

Is he the true God or a god of some sort (idols)?

The God that we should worship is the God who has done something for us- a God that has accompanied us in our journey and history.

Can we discern this God?

The people of Israel were given the choice:
 - To serve the God of history or the god of their fathers at the other side of the River (idols)
 - We should not serve the gods who can be manipulated.
 - We should serve the God who hates slavery and who accompanies us in our history.

^{32v}This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

THE FOCUS: Subordination (Aha!)

COMMENTARY

- Immediate textual context : our text belongs to Part IV of the letter (4:25—6:20) (NAB).
- It is entitled Daily Conduct, an Expression of Unity.
- Our text has two sections:
 - Vv. 21-24. Wives subordinating to husbands
 - Vv. 25-32. Husbands loving wives
- Now the question of submission.
 - Why submission? Nowadays, it is not pleasant to hear it especially when we talk about women’s rights and dignity. This text (and other texts in some other places in the Bible) has been considered by feminists as patriarchal and therefore oppressive, if not offensive to women.
- The preacher should be careful to clarify and not to condone the macho or the patriarchal attitude or system.
- Nowhere in the whole text shows that women (wives) should be oppressed.
- The vocabulary (submit) can be problematic, but the whole reading can clarify.
- Just taking a look at v.21, the opening verse. It is clear that submission (whatever that means) is reciprocal. The author did not use the same to men. Instead of using husbands submit to your wives, he uses husbands love....
- It is consistent with the motivation or analogy given by the author himself.
- There should be no complain whatsoever when we pattern our dealings with other people to how Christ deals with us, his church.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 34:2-3 ff)
 TASTE AND SEE THE GOODNESS
 OF THE LORD.

SECOND READING (Eph 5:21-32)

Wives to husbands

^{21*} ^qBe **subordinate** to one another out of reverence for Christ. ^{*} ^{22v}Wives should be **subordinate** (*hypotassomenoi*, submit) to their husbands as to the Lord. ^{23s}For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. ²⁴As the church is **subordinate** to Christ, so wives should be **subordinate** to their husbands in everything.

Husbands to wives

^{25c}Husbands, **love** (*agapate*) your wives, even as Christ **loved** the church and handed himself over for her ^{26u}to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, ^{27v}that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸So [also] husbands should **love** their wives as their own bodies. He who **loves** his wife **loves** himself. ²⁹For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, ^{30w}because we are members of his body.

^{31x}“For this reason a man shall leave [his] father and [his] mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

REFLECTIONS

The author is trying to address the problem of relationships in the family: husband, wife, and children. Our Reading tackles only the relationship between husband and wife.

The model of interrelationships is Christ’s relationship with the Church.

Christ, the savior (v.23), sanctifies and cleanses his church (v.25), loves (v.28), nourishes, cherishes (v.29) his church (us).

The word “submission” in our text must be interpreted in this context.

The author could have used another term, but it is not our job to change it or suggest another “non-offensive” to the moderns.

What is important is to see how we relate with one another. Is it loving, nourishing, cherishing, etc?

Also important is how the person of Christ enters into our human relationships. Is he our inspiration?

To love and nourish, etc. needs one “to hand oneself over” (v.25).

GOSPEL READING (Jn 6:60-69)

Disciples not believing

^{60*}Then many of his disciples who were listening said, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?”

Jesus proclaiming / reiterating

⁶¹Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, “Does this shock you? ⁶²What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?” ⁶³It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh* is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

Disciples not believing

^{64c}But there are some of you who do **not believe.**”

Jesus reiterating

Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would **not believe** and the one who would betray him. ⁶⁵And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father.”

Disciples not believing

⁶⁶As a result of this, many [of] his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.

Jesus to the Twelve

⁶⁷Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?”

Apostles believing

⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ^{69d}We have **come to believe** and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

THE FOCUS: Believing or Not Believing Jesus

REFLECTIONS

Faith keeps us one with Jesus.

In faith, we can take his words, though difficult to understand (mysterious).

We cannot remain with Jesus, if we hold on to our old beliefs and “philosophizings” (*pamimilosopo*), trying to rationalize everything. Faith goes beyond reason, but it is not unreasonable.

Faith is a gift from the Father (v.65).

Faith is sticking to Jesus, not leaving him when there are doubts and disputes.

The Christian, as a follower of Jesus, must realize that when he sells his ideas (convictions), not all will buy them. In fact, only a handful will.

In our mission, we should not complain if only a few are listening to us.

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading is about the pledge of loyalty of the Israelites to Yahweh. (*We will serve the Lord*).

The Second Reading talks about being subordinates to one another and to Jesus.

The Gospel Reading talks about believing or not believing (accepting or rejecting) Jesus’ words and claims.

How to develop your homily

Tell something about the one whom you are following (*It may be your idol, your friend or authority, the person you want to be with, his/her traits, talents and thoughts you appreciate most, etc.*)

What do you do with the person as you follow him or her? (*taking seriously his/her words, you don’t listen to other ideas that contradict his words, etc.*)

Now go to the theme of the Readings:

1) In the First Reading, following is translated into “serving the Lord,” not the foreign gods or the gods of the ancestors (which can be controlled, manipulated, nature gods, etc). The Lord that Israel should serve is the liberator God, caring God, the God who hates slavery.

2) In the Second Reading, following is expressed through submission and love. The relationship with one another and with God is expressed through submission. (Moslems do not have problem with this word. In fact, Islam means submission.)

3) In the Gospel Reading, following is expressed in faith in Jesus and remaining as followers. What the apostles did represents what we all should do as Christians. “Lord, to whom shall we go?”

What happens if we follow the wrong person, teaching the wrong values? (if we follow ourselves?)

We will be disconnected from our history, with God who has been active in our concrete lives, past, present and future.

What happens when we do not submit (serve) to one another and live as rugged individualists?

We will disintegrate as a family and community. We will not be able to give justice to our faith. We will violate human rights, women’s rights and children’s rights. We will only be Christians in name. We will not find what we are looking for freedom, salvation, protection, love, nurturance, etc.. These are experienced best when we are interconnected, practising justice to one another.

What happens if we leave Jesus and do our own thing?

We will become apostates. We cease to be Christians. We can not be in communion with Jesus and with Christian brothers and sisters in prayer and liturgy.

To end: In the eucharist, God invites us to be with him. Accepting this invitation means we submit ourselves (show our loyalty) to him and to one another. We serve the Lord when we participate in the eucharist. In the eucharist, we celebrate God’s gift of faith, communion, community and fraternity.

-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Recall a moment in your life when you vowed to the Lord to follow Him alone, and how you also wanted to include your kin. (HM)