

Rev. Derek Fairman

5th Sunday of Lent B

In the Gospel the Lord Jesus tells us that unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a great of wheat. If, however, the grain of wheat dies, it produces much fruit. This is a parable for these Greeks who would be His followers. Parables are rare occurrences in the Gospel According to John, although they appear often in Matthew, Mark and Luke. However, perhaps the author portrays the Lord Jesus giving a parable to these Greeks because the Greeks were famous for seeking wisdom.

We might wonder what brought these Greeks to seek the Lord Jesus. Was it the miracles He performed? Were they drawn to Him by His sublime teachings? We may never know, but they were drawn to Him and they wished to know more about Him. Even though Lord Jesus gives them this parable about the wheat that dies, He addresses them no further. Perhaps their search for wisdom has led them to the Lord Jesus, and if they are to understand Him further, they must understand that the Lord Jesus is the wheat that dies and bears much fruit.

They were drawn not only to His teachings, but the Lord Jesus drew these Greek followers to His sufferings. The Lord Jesus also draws us closer to His sufferings. We must understand, as the Lord Jesus invited these Greek followers to understand, that this parable about the wheat that dies and produces much fruit is not just about the Lord Jesus. This is also a parable about our spiritual life shared with the Lord Jesus.

During this Lenten season, we have been giving up things and making sacrifices. As we approach Holy Week, we bring these sacrifices to the Lord Jesus. We realize that Lent is not only a time to give things up, but to *offer* things up to the Lord. We draw near to Good Friday, when we remember the sacrifice that the Lord made for us. As we draw near, we do not come without our own sacrifices. We bring our sacrifices to the Lord in order to join them to the Sacrifice that the Lord Jesus made on Calvary.

This should not be a new concept to us. We know that every Mass is an opportunity for us to bring what we have to the Lord Jesus. The one Sacrifice that the Lord Jesus made is present at every Mass. This one Sacrifice is present, so that we can enter into that mystery. This one Sacrifice is present, so that we can add our own praises and our own sacrifice to what the Lord Jesus Himself offered to the Father.

If growing closer to the Lord is the point of our Lenten journey, then as we get closer to the Sacred Triduum, we draw closer to the Lord as well. We imitate the Lord's disciples who went to Jerusalem with Him. We draw closer to the Lord like the Jewish people who were drawing closer to the fulfillment of God's promises. We draw closer to the Lord like the Gentile people who were seeking truth and salvation.

Towards the end of the Gospel passage that we heard, the Lord Jesus states that He will draw all people to Himself. The Lord Jesus draws us also into the mystery of His Passion, Death and Resurrection. Drawing closer to the Lord does mean there will be suffering. Drawing closer to the Lord Jesus does mean sharing in His Passion and His Death. But there is much more than just drawing closer to the Lord Jesus in His suffering. It also means sharing in His Resurrection.

There are no doubt things that draw us to the Lord Jesus. There are those things that we enjoy about the Catholic faith. There are the ways that the Lord Jesus comes to us in our own lives to bring us joy. He shares the glory of the Resurrection with us. Perhaps we have wanted to share the glory of the Lord's Resurrection even more. Perhaps we have sought to have more joy in our lives. How do we do that?

The Lord may indeed draw us into the mystery of His Resurrection, but He draws us into the entirety of the Paschal Mystery. That means that we must be willing to make sacrifices. We don't like the idea of being drawn into suffering, but it is important to keep in mind that running away from making sacrifices means that we run away from the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus teaches us today that wherever He is, His true servants will be there with Him. The Lord Jesus shares His life with us, including the Sacrifice that He made.

Sacrifices are more than just about losing something or about suffering some loss. Sacrifices are made out of love, and we can receive much benefit from our sacrifices. When we make sacrifices for the Lord, the Lord does not forget what we have done for love of Him. No, we can be sure that our Lenten sacrifices will find their reward at Easter. The more deeply we enter into the mystery of the Lord's sufferings, the more deeply we enter into His glory.

As we approach the altar, we think about the Lenten sacrifices that we have made. Maybe we have made real spiritual progress during our Lenten journey this year. Maybe our Lenten journey has not been great so far. Well, this Lenten journey is not over yet. We still have time to make the most of Lent. We can still bring our Lenten sacrifices to the Lord. When we do so, we can be sure that the Lord will bring us joy this Easter.