

9. July 2020

“The refusal of the Gospel and the consequences”

Mt 10,8-15

And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those suffering from virulent skin-diseases, drive out devils. You received without charge, give without charge. Provide yourselves with no gold or silver, not even with coppers for your purses, with no haversack for the journey or spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the labourer deserves his keep. 'Whatever town or village you go into, seek out someone worthy and stay with him until you leave. As you enter his house, salute it, and if the house deserves it, may your peace come upon it; if it does not, may your peace come back to you. And if anyone does not welcome you or listen to what you have to say, as you walk out of the house or town shake the dust from your feet. In truth I tell you, on the Day of Judgement it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

The Lord draws our attention to something essential in this text. Spiritual goods or charismatic gifts must not become the object of material interests. If this happens, the message of God's free gift will be transformed into its opposite, thus darkening the image of God.

On the whole, the text of today's Gospel teaches us what the call to true simplicity of the disciples of Christ is like. They should rely in everything on the one who sends them and be free from worries about their livelihood! In this exclusive attachment to God lies their freedom and the ability to respond always everywhere to the call of the Lord and to give the right response to the particular situation into which they are led. If they are received, it is to the glory of the house, because in receiving the disciples it gives glory to God. Everything that the disciples have received from the Lord, they can then share with those living in the house. They will then receive peace, that peace that only God can give!

If we try to apply the text to the present day, we will certainly notice the radicality that is being asked here: no provision, receiving nothing for service, expecting the reward exclusively from God, shaking the dust off our feet when the message is not accepted, and the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, those cities that perished for their sins. It can easily happen then that we would like to soften the radicalness

of the text a little. Perhaps we are also tempted to want to explain things in their time context and thus pull their teeth a little!

Of course it is justified to transfer the words to the present day and thus make them more understandable, but it must not be as if the present day has to correct the words.

Furthermore, the mission is still valid: "*Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those suffering from virulent skin-diseases, drive out devils.*"

The grace of the Lord, his authority, is present in the disciples of today, for how could God withdraw this mission that he gave until the end of time?

The question is rather whether the faith of today's disciples of the Lord is strong enough to rely on him in everything, and whether they understand that anxious concern for material security contradicts the spirit of their mission. It is precisely the act of faith, to live entirely out of God's providence, that brings God's presence all the more strongly to light and makes it all the clearer that the disciple is sent and does not come in his own authority! In this connection the Lord even speaks of a right: "*the labourer deserves his keep*". So the disciple is promised all the help necessary for his ministry.

But what about the statements that are very serious for our eyes: "*shake the dust from your feet*" and that it will be worse for those who do not want to hear the word than for Sodom and Gomorrah?

The Gospel is a great grace of the Lord, which he offers to men. It is not indifferent whether one absorbs the truth or remains in delusion. We can see this very well in the way of the Jewish people. The rejection of the gospel had consequences. Jesus knew the consequences of the rejection and wept that the hour of grace was not recognized (*cf. Lk 19,41-44*).

And what about Sodom and Gomorrah?

Let us take the example of Europe. What a great grace for this continent that the Gospel was proclaimed and received. But what is the situation today, when the Gospel is less and less followed? Sins have spread and are poisoning many peoples, and especially fornication, which is played down and called normal behaviour. The consequences are catastrophic: abortion, broken marriages, homosexuality as an accepted way of life, illegitimate relationships, parentless

children, pornography, media campaigns against chastity, self-destruction of peoples....

Sodom and Gomorrah? Self-destruction as a result of the rejection of the Gospel is already happening!