

30. October 2024

No false safety

Lk 13:22-30

Jesus went teaching through towns and villages, making his way to Jerusalem. Someone said to him, 'Sir, will there be only a few saved?' He said to them, Try your hardest to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed. Once the master of the house has got up and locked the door, you may find yourself standing outside knocking on the door, saying, "Lord, open to us," but he will answer, "I do not know where you come from." Then you will start saying, "We once ate and drank in your company; you taught in our streets," but he will reply, "I do not know where you come from; away from me, all evil doers!" Then there will be weeping and grinding of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrown out. And people from east and west, from north and south, will come and sit down at the feast in the kingdom of God. Look, there are those now last who will be first, and those now first who will be last.'

Are few saved? The Lord gives a direct answer to this serious question... But He makes this distinction clear to us: on the one hand, God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4); on the other hand, man must fulfil the necessary conditions to reach the Kingdom of God. So we must not have a false security, neglecting our own efforts.... This is what the Lord is telling us very clearly today! It requires all our strength to remain in the grace given to us.

It is most profitable to recall again and again these clear words of Jesus, so that we do not fall away in our following of Christ and do not allow ourselves to be swept away by the current of indifference, which happens so easily. Human optimism about God's goodness is not enough; what is needed is a firm decision on our part not to put anything before the Lord, to work seriously on our faults, to practise the works of mercy and to examine again and again from a spiritual perspective whether we are on the right path.

Of course God should be loved in the first instance for Himself, and all our efforts should be directed to His glorification, thus giving Him the response of our love. But we must also strive "with fear and trembling" for our own salvation (cf. Phil. 2:12), so

that we do not find ourselves one day at closed doors. There are many Gospel passages in which the Lord makes us see this possibility. He certainly does not do so to make us frightened, but to make us vigilant. These clear words are therefore related to the exhortation to fight with all our strength for our salvation.

It is not enough, therefore, to have known the Lord and to have eaten and drunk with Him; but we are called to walk the path of conversion in its entirety, and to deepen it day by day. For this reason, the Church cannot neglect the teaching of the so-called "last things" - the ultimate realities of man - which confront us with the seriousness of the decisions we make for our lives. Although "*God's mercy prevails over judgment*" (Jas 2:13) and is ready to forgive man everything, it can only be effective when it goes hand in hand with truth. God's mercy cannot be presented as mere human compassion, leaving aside the exhortation to conversion.

We cannot create a "sugar-coated" image of Jesus, as if He would accommodate our every demand and modify His teaching to suit our desires. Those who act like this are false prophets, propagating a false image of God and deceiving men. It is the spirit of Antichrist who wants to persuade a person that it is natural to yield to his inclinations and that this is not so serious.... The Antichrist will promote a religion that permits practically everything, and will accuse as "rigorists" those who hold to the truth and take seriously the Lord's demand for conversion.

These strong words of the Lord must not be overlooked! They in no way contradict the mercy of God; we can never become accustomed to sin or drink of the poison of the relativisation of sin! The mild and gentle Lord, who at every hour comes to meet us with His love and offers us His forgiveness, is the same Lord who earnestly exhorts us not to neglect the way of conversion, lest we have received His grace in vain (2 Cor 6:1).