

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Intermediate

Submitted by lectionaryadmin on Wed, 06/15/2016 - 20:00

Intermediate Session

Deuteronomy 11:18, 26-28, 32

Matthew 7:21-27

Opening Prayer

Let us Pray,

Lord, Giver of all Life,

I know that sometimes I try to take the easy way out. When it seems too hard to do the right thing, help me remember the story of the foolish man who built his house on the sand. Let my life be built on the solid rock of your love so that when the storms of life come, I will be strong in my faith and foundation. Thank you for loving me enough to be there for me . . . to be my rock. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Opening Life Activity

Create a word search of contrasting terms. Beginning with the Gospel reading and several verses before, use words like reward-punishment, destruction-life, happy-sad, rich-poor, enter-depart, stand-fall. Continue with others like darkness-light, empty-full and so on. Give your word search to someone not involved in creating it. See how many pairs the person can find and then tell them the story about building a house on rock or sand.

Listening to the Word of God

Listen as Moses encourages the Israelites to follow the commands of God.

Read Deuteronomy 11:18, 26-28, 32

Allow for silence

Scripture Discussion Starters

- What does Moses suggest the Israelites do so they remember the words Moses gives them this day?
- What is the blessing Moses sets before them?
- What is the curse?

Jesus explains the importance of showing how truly we believe God's word by how we live. If we pretend to follow Jesus but our actions are lacking, it will be clear on the final day. Jesus illustrated his point by comparing how foolish it is to build a house on sand and how wise it is to build it on a solid rock foundation.

Read Matthew 7:21-27

Allow for Silence

- What does Jesus say will happen if we only give "lip service" to our belief in God's word?
- What kinds of things represent "sand" in our faith life?
- Why is a rock foundation important to Christians?

Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the Catechist Background

section.

Just before the Israelites enter Canaan, Moses delivers his farewell speech to them. He knows that he will not live to cross into the land with them, but he has some important points he wants them to remember. He even suggests that they write down the points he wants to make and keep them attached to their bodies. To this day, some Jewish people wear phylacteries (pronounced fi-lak' ter-?z), which is a case holding small pages of prayers and scripture. They wear this prayer box strapped to their foreheads as a reminder of their prayers. Moses explains to them the importance of following God's laws. If they follow the law they will be blessed. On the other hand, it will be a curse for them if they do not.

Matthew concludes the section of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in today's Gospel reading. Jesus explains that it is not enough to say you believe the word of God but that you must live and act according to the words. To simply say you believe, is like building your house on sand. This would be foolish because when the rains come, the house would shift and break away from its loose foundation. But if our actions demonstrate our sincere belief in God and our faith is built on a firm foundation, such as a house built on rock, we will be strong when the storms of life come.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

- Who are some people you know or have heard about whose faith has been built on rock? What kinds of storms did they face? How did their rock foundation help them survive the storms?
- When have you demonstrated your love for Jesus by your actions? Share a time when you lived out your belief rather than just stating it.
- Is there something coming up in your week where the strength of your faith will be tested? If your house is built on rock, what will your response be?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the Gospel in Life.]

Doctrinal Discussion Starters

How we stand before God

By God's grace and the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are saved from sin. We can refuse these gifts from God through our own free will. At the same time, however, we can grow in this right relationship with God by exercising the virtues given to us. That is by living and acting, not just saying we believe, the love and commands demonstrated by Jesus we improve our relationship with God. In order to embrace the message of salvation, we must put into action God's saving word.

- How do we cooperate between God's grace and our freedom to act?
- What choices do we have in accepting God's grace? What happens if we refuse to accept it?
- What is necessary on our part for us to be in a right relationship with God?

Sacrament Connection

We begin our relationship in God's family at the time of our baptism. It is at baptism that we first receive the gift of God's grace through the Holy Spirit. We become holy and graced at our baptism, but at the same time, we are challenged to walk in the light of Christ. To do this we must take action. Our very deeds, and not just our words, must show that we are children of God.

The Gospel in Life

What part of your relationship with Jesus is on a wobbly foundation? Is there something you know you should do but avoid? Or is there something you do that you know is not pleasing to God? Take an action step today to correct the problem and improve the foundation of your relationship with



God.

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