

NT-MK18

11/11/18

A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark by Paulinus of Nola ¹

What have you, asks the Apostle, that you have not received? This means, beloved, that we should not be miserly, regarding possessions as our own, but should rather invest what has been entrusted to us. We have been entrusted with the administration and use of temporal wealth for the common good, not with the everlasting ownership of private property. If you accept the fact that ownership on earth is only for a time, you will earn eternal possessions in heaven.

Call to mind the widow who forgot herself in her concern for the poor, and, thinking only of the life to come, gave away all her means of subsistence, as the judge himself bears witness. Others, he says, have given of their surplus wealth; but she, possessed of only two small coins and more needy perhaps than many of the poor – though in spiritual riches she surpassed all the wealthy – she thought only of the world to come, and had such a longing for heavenly treasure that she gave away, all at once, whatever she had that was derived from the earth and destined to return there.

Let us then invest with the Lord what he has given us, for we have nothing that does not come from him; we are dependent upon him for our very existence. And we ourselves particularly, who have a special and greater debt, since God not only created us but purchased us as well – what can we regard as our own when we do not possess even ourselves?

But let us rejoice that we have been bought at a great price. The price of our Lord's own blood, and that because of this we are no longer worthless slaves. For there is a freedom that is baser than slavery, namely, freedom from justice. Whoever has that kind of freedom is a slave of sin and a prisoner of death. So let us give back to the Lord the gifts he has given us; let us give to him who receives in the person of every poor man or woman. Let us give gladly, I say, and great joy will be ours when we receive his promised reward.

¹Journey with the Fathers – Year B – New City Press – 1999 -pg 132

OT-JER10.WPD
11.12.2018

A reading on the mission of Jeremiah the prophet, from a book by Adrienne von Speyr.¹

[Jeremiah] occupies a midway position between God and man that is characterized, not by a state of equilibrium among all the things connected with his mission, but by a process of being tossed back and forth.... He had always possessed his mission, before he was born, before he was able to express an opinion about it, to say Yes or No; he had always been chosen for, and charged with, this mission. And when God presents him with the actual commission, he resists, in the opinion that he is not worthy, that things will not go well or might totally miscarry. He has no doubts about the truth of his prophecy's substance, insofar as he was able to receive what God was conveying to him. But he does not see himself as a potential transmitter of such words. And when he finally accepts his office, he has, to a certain extent, sided with God because of the necessity of his mission rather than from personal choice.

At the very moment when he is actually engaged in prophecy or is otherwise carrying out his task, he possesses the sureness of one graced by God, a sureness, however, that deserts him once that task is over. He has to endure so much mistreatment by the people, who vehemently reject him, that God's objective viewpoint is lost to him, while—more or less as a result of the rebukes—he enters into the arguments of the people and has to grant them a certain reasonableness, indeed, even a necessity. He is repeatedly made a scapegoat by the people; yet he feels himself to be primarily the scapegoat of God, who treats him badly, who is in no way willing to adapt the scale of his mission to suit his human proportions. And he complains. He complains because he has to persevere in this impossible midway position.... And yet so strongly is he disposed to take God as his master that new tasks can scarcely arise within his mission before he is on the way to carrying them out. Even when he takes an indignant stand against God, he knows that he has already lost, has already said Yes, because that Yes was spoken by God and not by him, a Yes that is stronger than his life. What he dreads most is the substance of his prophecies. He must always say precisely what he by no means wishes to say, something that is not appropriate to him, and [something] that prudence also suggests would be better left unsaid, since he knows it will set the people against him again. -over

¹ *The Mission of the Prophets*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996, pp. 74ff.

His prayer is a noteworthy point, because there he defends himself against God and men in a way that effectively reverses the prayer of the Son, who shares the vision of the Father and sees through men. Jeremiah tends to have the vision of the people and to see through God's intentions. His prayer runs something like this: "Thy will be done, but might mine nevertheless also be done for once." ...As if God were lacking in real knowledge of human needs. [Jeremiah] also knows what adoration is, but practices it with a certain caution and reserve instilled in him by the sad results of his experiences as a prophet. And yet his will to do whatever God wills is evident in everything... even though he has to argue with God. This rebellion is permitted by God the Father, with a view to allowing the truly complete submission of the Son to stand out in all its splendor.

A reading from *The Golden Epistle* of William of St. Thierry in praise of the monastic vocation. 1

Surely it is right to feast in the Lord and rejoice because the fairest part of the Christian religion, which seemed to come into close contact with heaven, has returned to life after having died, has been found after being lost.

Our ears had heard tell of it, but we did not believe. We read in books of it and marveled at the ancient glory of the solitary life and at the great grace of God manifested in it; when suddenly we found it in the clearings of a wood, on God=s mountain, on the fertile mountain, where the fair places of the desert now wax fat on its richness and the hills are girt with exultation.

For there, through you it now offers itself to all and in you it displays itself. Hitherto unknown, it stands revealed in a few simple men. He who brings it among us is the same who by means of a few simple men subjected the whole world to himself, to the amazement of that world. *Y A Do not be afraid then, you, my little flock, @ says the Lord, Abut show utter trust, because your Father has determined to give you his kingdom@* (Lk 12.32)... It is not for you to concern yourselves feebly with the ordinary commandments nor to give your attention only to what God lays down as of obligation; you must seek his desires, fulfill in yourselves what is God=s will, the good thing, the desirable thing, the perfect thing.

It is for others to serve God, it is for you to cling to him; it is for others to believe in God, know him, love him and revere him; it is for you to taste him, understand him, be acquainted with him, enjoy him.

This is no slight matter, no easy goal; but he who, in his love, makes you such promises is almighty and good. He will be faithful in fulfilling them and untiring in giving help. To those who in their great love for him pledge themselves to great things and, believing and trusting in his grace, undertake what is beyond their own strength, he imparts both the will and the desire; and he follows up the grace to will by bestowing also the power to achieve. Let the calumniator calumniate as he will: if a person faithfully does what is humanly possible for him to do, God

himself in his mercy will give judgment for his poor one, will champion his cause, because the person did what he could.

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Yet, brethren, let all exaltation be far from the opinion you have of yourselves. Y Consider [others] as being far above you in strength and admire their glory, those who are mighty with both hands who use their left hand as readily as their right. As long as they are allowed, they love to stay inside and devote their leisure with all devotion to the contemplation of truth in charity; then when necessity summons or duty impels, they go out without a moment=s hesitation to give themselves to the practice of charity in truth.

Rather, in fear and trembling work out your own salvation. Do not wonder what others are like but, to the best of your ability, what they may become through your influence; not only those who are now alive but also those who will come after you and take you as their models in the pursuit of their vocation. For it is from you, from your example, from your authority that all the future of this holy Order in these parts will derive its character.

OT-JER29
11.14.18

A Commentary on the Prophecies of Jeremiah by St. Jerome ¹

The whole of Judea was led into captivity. Nebuchadnezzar had come, and thousands of people were displaced into Babylonia as prisoners. Jeremiah alone was left praising God, and they threw him into a muddy cistern; nevertheless, the soul of this one man was more precious than that of all the people. Would you know what one person can do? Jesus, son of Nave. was alone, although the whole world was inhabited. There were, to be sure, countless multitudes, but he was alone. Alone he commanded the sun and the moon, and they stood still. A man gives an order, and heaven gives heed. Heaven listened to him because he was listening to the Lord. Jeremiah was in captivity, but there was also with him great numbers of exiles. What does he say? "I sat alone, because you filled me with indignation." How were you alone in the city? I say, I was alone because I had no one with whom to share my purpose.

¹ Ancient Christian Commentaries on Scripture – O.T. – vol. XII – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL – 2009 – pg 236

11SN1503

11.15.18

A Sermon of St. Bernard for the Dedication of the Church ²

My brethren, we ought to observe today's festivity all the more devoutly for the reason that it is so peculiarly our own. All the other sacred solemnities which we keep are common to us with the faithful in general. But this is so proper to ourselves that if we do not keep it, it will not be kept at all. It is our own feast, because it is the feast of the dedication of our own church. It is still more our own because it is the feast of our own selves. For what of sanctity can belong to these dead walls which cause them to be honored with a religious solemnity? They are undoubtedly holy, but it is because of your bodies. Will anyone question that your bodies are holy, since they are "the temples of the Holy Spirit"? Consequently your souls are sanctified because of the spirit of God "Who is in you", your bodies are sanctified because of your souls, and this house is sanctified also because of your bodies. The Psalmist prayed "Preserve my soul for I am holy". Truly "God is wonderful in His saints", not alone in His saints in heaven, but also those on earth. For He has His saints in both places and shows Himself wonderful in them all, beatifying those above, consummating the sanctity of those below.

Accordingly it is your own festival, dearest brethren, your very own, that you are celebrating today. You have been dedicated to the Lord and the Lord has chosen and adopted you as His own peculiar people. Oh, how wisely you have acted, dearly beloved, in renouncing all that you might have possessed in this world, since by doing so you have deserved to become the peculiar people of the world's Creator, and to have Him as your special possession, for He is undoubtedly "the portion and inheritance" of His own!

See, therefore, if it is not right to observe as a festival the day on which the Lord adopted us as His own and took formal possession of us through His ministers, thus accomplishing in fact what He had promised long ago, saying, "I in the midst of them shall be their God", while we should be "the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand". For when this house was consecrated to the Lord by the ministry of the Bishop, it was manifestly for our sakes it was done; not only for the sake of those who were actually present then, but also for the sake of all those who until the end of time shall serve God in this holy place. Therefore, dearest brethren, it is necessary that what has already been accomplished in the walls in a visible manner should be invisibly accomplished in ourselves.

² St. Bernard's Sermons – vol. II – The Carroll Press – Westminster, MD – 1950 – p 385

11SN1603

11/16/18

FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. GERTRUDE THE GREAT³

O love, the fruition of you is that worthiest coupling of your Word and the soul which is brought about by perfect union with God. To use you is to become intertwined in God. To enjoy you is to be one with God. You are that peace which surpasses all understanding and you are the road by which one comes to the inner chamber.

Oh, if only it happened to me, too, miserable as I am, to repose for a moment under your dearest cloak of cherishing-love so that my heart might be emboldened by one consolatory utterance of your living Word, or that my soul might hear this good and pleasant word from your mouth: 'I am your salvation; behold, now the bedchamber of my heart is open to you.'

Why, then, O love so unwavering, have you deeply loved someone so foul, so ugly, if not to make her beautiful in you? Your loving-kind charity attracts and allures me, O tender flower of the virgin Mary.

Let me not be confounded in my expectation but grant me to find rest for my soul in you. I have found nothing more desirable, I have judged nothing more lovable, I have wished for nothing more dear than to be held tight, O love, in your embraces, to rest under the wings of my Jesus, and to dwell in the tabernacle of divine charity.

O love, O radiant noonday, I would die a thousand times to be at rest in you. If only you would bend to me your face of such beautiful cherishing-love, O dearest one.

Oh, if I were granted to come exceedingly close to you so that I might now find myself not only next to you but within you. Then, through you, sun of justice, flowers of all the virtues might arise in me, who am dust and ashes. With you as a husband, my Lord, such fecundity might enter my soul that the renowned offspring of total perfection would be born in me. Then, having been snatched from the valley of this misery, I might be able to glory in you forever in the

³SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, by St Gertrude the Great, Trans. by G. J. Lewis & J. Lewis (Cistercian Publications Kalamazoo 1989) pp. 78-79.

presence of your desirable face; for you, mirror without spot, have not scorned to be, in truth, coupled with a sinner like me.

MY-01

11.17.2018

Mary as the Model for Christians, from the book *Mary, Mother of the Lord* by Fr. Karl Rahner.⁴

What is perfect Christianity? Perfect Christianity must consist in receiving this gift of the eternal God, God himself, in grace-given freedom, with body and soul and all the powers of the whole being, with all one is and has, all one does and suffers, so that this receiving of God takes up our entire nature and our whole life-history into the eternal life of God. Perfect Christianity must mean that our public and our private acts, what appears publicly before the world in its history, and what takes place in the inner depths of conscience, perfectly coincide and correspond. What occurs there in the depths of Christian life becomes visible, and conversely, what is visible and manifest, truly mirrors what is taking place in the depths of the soul, in God's presence. Christianity in its perfection must also mean that this Christian's perfect Christianity unconditionally serves the salvation of others, and is only really perfect if it is actually devoted to all, from the beginning to the end of time.

If that is what perfect Christianity is, then we can and must say that Mary is the actual realization of it, the perfect Christian. If Christianity in its perfect form is the pure acceptance of the salvation of the eternal triune God that has appeared in Jesus Christ, Mary is the perfect Christian, the Christian human being exemplified as such, because in the faith of her spirit and in her blessed womb, with body and soul, then, and all the powers of her being, she received the eternal Word of the Father. If perfect Christianity is the perfect correspondence between outward mission in the history of salvation and personal life, it is perfectly realized in Mary. She received visibly and tangibly the Incarnate Word of the eternal Father, and so she is the most significant and representative figure among the merely human beings in the externally visible history of redemption. And at the same time she accepted fully and realized in her personal life her unique office in the economy of redemption, with an absolutely unconditional total consent in faith. If Christianity is the radiating influence of one's own grace in unselfish service for the salvation of others, Mary is the most perfect instance of what it means to be a Christian, for it was the salvation of us all, Jesus Christ our Lord, whom she conceived by the consent of her faith and in the physical reality of her divine motherhood.

⁴Mary Mother of the Lord, Herder and Herder: NY 1963. pp36-37.

