

22 Sunday OT C 2016

August 27/28

Fraze/Callaway

How does a person get into your home? He is either a thief or needs to be invited. It could be that he is a member of the family or such a good friend that he is able to act like family. So...how does God get into your home?

God is not a thief, but the evil one is. God waits to be invited. Then when a room has been prepared, God will stay until you arrive at your room in heaven.

In the opening prayer we prayed, "...God of might, giver of every good gift. Put into our hearts the love of your name..."

To ask God to "put" something into our hearts presumes an invitation--we give God permission to come and not simply to the edges but wholly into our lives. God accepts this invitation with the intention of moving in fully—including rearranging and renovating whatever does not fit with the Master-Builder's plan.

God, who is all-powerful, restrains himself from entering a heart that does not welcome him. God will not force grace on us or into us. God will come and is here and will enter IF we invite him.

When grace comes, we are never left undisturbed. None of us are perfect and some of us are far from perfect. Grace moves us toward holiness and nudges us on the way to perfection.

If my furnace is broken, the repair man will not come unless I invite him. Once he is at the house he cannot do anything from the front door. He has to come ALL the way in. When he has completed the work he will...what? Ask me to pay for it!

Most of the time we want cheap grace. We want God to give us everything at no cost—we don't want to change our habits or our hearts. God quickly discovers an invitation that is insincere. We ask him to come, but we do not open the door. We beg him to give us what we want while not considering from the perspective of heaven what we need. God knows when we are willing to accept His gifts. And to accept grace usually means that we need to surrender an imperfection or reject a sinful inclination.

When God enters our hearts, he takes his shoes off first. He is very careful. He does not disturb what is true and right, but affirms and strengthens it. He rearranges and renovates and sometimes removes what is not good and true and holy. The pain comes from our resistance,

our failure to trust and, most of all, from our pride. This brings us to another theme in today's scriptures.

The Book of Sirach puts it simply and directly, "Conduct your affairs with humility." When Jesus talked about humility, he offered a simple image, "Take the lowest place." Let's translate this into daily life.

What is the lowest place regarding the remote control?

What is the lowest place when it comes to cleaning the bathroom?

What is the lowest place when we are in a hurry driving?

What is the lowest place regarding the choice of food or restaurant?

What is the lowest place when a diaper needs to be changed?

What is the lowest place when it comes to tithing and sacrificing for others?

What is the lowest place when it comes our prayer life?

We can have a tendency to seek the lowest place when it suits us. This is actually selfishness wrapped in a bow.

The lowest place is what St. Paul advised in his discourse on marriage. He says to husbands and wives, *defer* to one another. When each of you is always seeking the lowest place, then all of those descriptors of love in Corinthians become not only possible but realized: love is patient; love is kind; love is not jealous; it is not pompous; it is not inflated; it is not rude; it does not seek its own interests; it is not quick-tempered; it does not brood over injuries. If your marriage has been suffering from any of these, perhaps one or both of you are not seeking the lowest place.

Let's return to our opening prayer. What happens when God is invited to put something into our hearts? "God of might, giver of every good gift...put into our hearts the love of your name, so that, by deepening our sense of reverence, you may nurture in us what is good and, by our watchful care, keep safe what you have nurtured. We ask this through Christ our Lord."