

Commentary to the Sixteenth Sunday of the Year - Cycle B



Eliot wrote, "Where shall the word be found, where will the word resound. Not here, there is not enough silence." William F Buckley, Jr was quoted as saying that he found Jesus "endearing." A critic said, "Nonsense. Buckley does not have enough material to make such a judgment." Who was correct? Let's go to the Gospel record. Today's Gospel gives us a good start. Jesus must have been exhausted. Presumably He was running on empty. So, He decides on a weekend pass for Himself. Obviously He believed in the law that unless you come apart and rest awhile, you may just come apart.

Most of us, someone said, get run down because we stay wound up. It is instructive to know that even the Nazarene took a few days off now and again. He endorses the line that teaches when we are not quiet enough to be mindful of who we are, we never know whom we wish to become. However, His hiding place was quickly discovered. Mark tells us "a large crowd" gave chase. How did the tightly wrapped Christ react? Did He go ballistic and chase His fans away Mark tells us that "He took pity on them and set Himself to teach them at some length." I personally find His concern "endearing." Incidentally, Mark tells us that many in that crowd "hurried" to the spot where the Teacher was hiding. We can compute from clues given that they jogged ten miles to get to His hideout.

Surely they would not have done so had they not been convinced that He was an endearing person. When was the last time you jogged even one mile to listen to someone? How did people, who knew Him best, react to Him. Let's go back to the evidence. "And Jesus grew gaining favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52) The men in question are of course the men and women of His hometown Nazareth. We know He spent His boyhood, teens, and young manhood there. We are talking about many years. Still people obviously enjoyed having Him among them.

If you will, they found Him "endearing." Doesn't this point tell us much about Him Think of the kids in your town to whom you would gladly give money to quit your community. Or how about Matthew 19:13-15? Psychologists say that children have special antenna to pick out the genuine and the fraud among us adults. "Some people brought children to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them." Notice

the youngsters did not flee. As a matter of fact, they stayed around the Nazarene so long that the apostles grew annoyed.

They attempted to chase them. The Teacher put the twelve in their place. He had seen a need and offered Himself. They had seen the same need and could think of nothing but the cost to themselves. The kids were delighted to get a few extra minutes' with the Lord. When was the last time strange children came to you seeking your company and blessing? An honest answer tells you much about Jesus. How did the moneyed class judge Him? Turn to Luke 19:1-10 for the answer. The city was Jericho. The millionaire was Zacchaeus. He was anxious to check out the itinerant Rabbi. So, without minding his imported silk toga and handcrafted sandals, he climbed out on the branches of a sycamore tree. He was so carried away by what ensued that he blurted, "I will give half my belongings to the poor." (Lk 19:8)

Carefully note that the Master had not asked the fellow for even a dollar. What does this point tell you? I add parenthetically we are talking about the type of parishioner every pastor dreams of having but seldom gets. How about His effect on cops? John tells the story. The Temple authorities sent the police to pick Jesus up. They came back empty-handed. Their bosses were not amused and laid out the fellows in black and blue. The cops in turn nervously said, "Nobody has ever talked the way this man does." (Jn 7:46) Any alleged perpetrator who can charm cops from arresting Him must have a lot going for Him.

If you have any doubts on that point, think of the last time you attempted to con a state trooper from giving you a ticket for doing 65 miles per hour in a 40 mph zone. I submit the most hard-nosed among us must concur that we have more than enough Gospel evidence to conclude that Jesus was indeed "endearing." I can almost hear Buckley purring, "Why did you ever doubt me?"

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