

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Sep 25th 2014

Wow, what a reality check! Today's readings come at a good time for me.....the beginning of a new semester here at Creighton University. We just heard the exciting news from Fr. Lannon of all our top regional and national rankings. Creighton is recognized for providing value, promoting purpose, and performing miracles in our society. All of my classes are off to a great start. The students are engaged and eager to work hard to live up to our prestigious reputation. My research is rewarding and my plans for sabbatical next year are falling into place. My memberships on two dynamic think tank/advocacy boards addressing food and health issues allow me to make important contributions to education and action toward sustainable food and health policies. And on top of that, my community garden site looks fabulous!!! All of my work is prospering! So, what is wrong with that?

All this is vanity, says the Lord! I need to face it: there's nothing in all of this for me....no profit for my labor in the sun. I'm really not doing anything that hasn't already been done by someone else who is long forgotten. And no one will remember me...I will return to dust! It doesn't matter. Or does it?

In my reflection of the readings, it seems to me that it does matter. But it isn't about me. The Lord does not change the fact that we will wither and die. But we can still pray that the Lord will prosper the work of our hands. How does that work? Simply this: it's God's work, not ours. It seems to me that the Lord does have mercy on us and is with us in our labor if we do what we do for God. To me, the most helpful verses today are, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart," and "fill us at daybreak with your kindness, that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days." I think this means that if we do our work for recognition and self-satisfaction, we are kidding ourselves about how important we are in the larger scheme of things. Our purposes are just too trivial and the calendars we keep are downright petty.

It seems to me that if we number our days in terms of God's plan, we will make wiser choices in our labors. And that matters. We won't be wasting so much time. So instead of checking our calendars in the morning and asking God to prosper our labors as if they really are ours, we should ask for God's kindness that we may shout for joy and gladness for the work we have before us. Today I am giving thanks that God does prosper our work and that in every age, the Lord has been a kind refuge for his servants. That is good news to me because I have a lot of work to do. I pray today that I will have the wisdom of heart to do God's work (not mine), with joy and gladness!

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