

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Sep 7th 2016**

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is a reply to the brothers' and sisters' questions regarding their distress over their choice of a course in life - their vocation. Paul confides that he has not received a commandment from God concerning "virgins," i.e., young, unmarried people. He does, however, offer his own insight on the matter as one who "by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy." Paul senses the Corinthians' distress, and offers this advice: remain as you are, if you can, and there will be less affliction in your earthly life. If you do decide to marry, he continues, you do not sin. I believe that Paul viewed marriage, or any major change in lifestyle, as a distraction from the full practice of their faith. His additional message that, "time is running out" and that the "world in its present form is passing away," may insinuate that Paul felt a greater sense of urgency than was felt by the Corinthians. If the time was indeed short, then living out one's vocation, or to remain as he or she is, was the best advice. In this way, the brothers and sisters in Corinth would best be able to concentrate on their faith and the attainment of happiness in heaven.

The gospel for today can be summarized: Are you poor? Are you hungry? Are you weeping? Are you hated? Have you been insulted? Are you thought to be evil because you believe in the Son of Man? If you are experiencing these low points in your life because of your beliefs, then "Blessed are you. Your reward will be great in heaven." As the Alleluia and the gospel state, "Rejoice and leap for joy on that day."

On the other hand, if you are now rich, satiated, laughing, and well-liked by everyone (as were the smooth-talking false prophets of old), then you will be given the opposite conditions. Jesus reminds us that the sacrifice of earthly joys and happiness in his name will bring us closer to God and our rewards in heaven. Woe to us if our rewards primarily are received in pursuit of wealth and happiness on earth. Selfish concentration on our own comfort to the exclusion of sacrifice for our spiritual benefit will not bring happiness and great heavenly reward.

Tom Quinn-Creighton University's School of Medicine