

March 3, 2019 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary time

One day John got to work and he had crumbs on his shirt and he had wet pants. People were like, "John, what happened?" He said, "Coming to work this morning there was a woman driving 65 miles an hour with her face next to her rear view mirror, putting on her eye liner. I looked away and the next thing you know she's half way into my lane, still putting on her make up. As a man I don't scare easily, but she scared me so much, I dropped my electric shaver, which snapped the donut out of my hand, with all the confusion of trying to straighten out the car using my knees against the steering wheel, I dropped my cell phone away from my ear, which fell into my coffee between my legs, and soaked my trousers, and disconnected an important phone call. All because of that crazy woman driver!" Yes, be careful who you blame.

Today we have a special day. The 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday in ordinary time happens very rarely. The 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday in ordinary time is even rarer. The last time we celebrated the 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday in ordinary time, was almost 20 years ago. It all depends on when Easter falls and then Ash Wednesday. This year it's fallen later so we get the 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday. So, these readings have not been read for over 40 years. These prayers, almost 20 years ago. Consider yourself very blessed this year because you get to have an extra Sunday of Ordinary time.

In our first reading, from the book of Sirach, Ben (Sirach is his last name) he says, "Out of the mouth comes what the heart is." He said, "Peoples' mouths tell what they really are." People say, "Oh, you can praise somebody, you can say like to a politician, we here it all the time, celebrities and politicians are opening up their mouths all the time and saying things. And even though it's not very nice, people are still following them. People are still going with them. Sirach says, "No, the fruit of the tree shows what character it has and whether it's going to be good or bad." The same thing happens with us. If you want to know how a person really is, listen to what they say. Good will come out of them if they're good, bad will come out of them if they're bad. In our world today, there's so much whining and complaining that it makes you wonder sometimes if there is any good. And then you read a story that's good and you're like, "Oh, thank you God, there's still good coming out.

In our gospel, Jesus continues the sermon on the plain. We saw some of that last week. Luke had the sermon on the plain, Matthew has the sermon on the mount. What they did was they found a lot of sayings about Jesus, things that Jesus said. And they couldn't remember where they went, but they knew they were still important. Anything Jesus said was important, so they put them together in kind of a sermon. That's what we have today and last week we had, "Judge and you shall be judged." We continue today with, "Don't follow a blind person." Two blind people walking through the desert, are going to fall into a pit. Now, what year here Jesus talking about? Realistically, in the time of Jesus, people dug wells for water. When they dug and didn't find water, they left the hole, they didn't fill it in. So, people were always falling into these holes and dying. Arizona has a similar situation; we're the only state with a mining inspector that we elect every several years. His job is to go around and find abandoned mines and fill them in before somebody falls in them and dies. So we have the same kind of thing. But Jesus wasn't talking about physical blindness. Jesus was talking about, who are you learning your spiritual stuff from? Who is teaching you your religion? Who is teaching you your spirituality and theology? Is this person true to the faith? Is this person teaching the truth? The objective truth or are

they teaching the subjective truth, what they believe is true? Because if they do, then it's a blind person leading a blind person. So He is saying, "Be careful." Be careful who you have teach you the faith and who you listen to. Make sure it stands up against the Ten Commandments, the Gospels, the Bible, and the teachings of the Church. Make sure that you're not following somebody that's going to lead you astray. And also He says, "Make sure you remember not to be arrogant about what you learn, because your teacher is always going to know a little more than you do. And if you want to learn more you're going to have to go to another teacher because, teachers don't teach everything. They always want to keep something back so that they're still the teacher. Sometimes teachers are honest and they'll say, "I have no more to teach you, you need to find another teacher." This happens in music. Someone playing the violin and their teacher says, "Well that's it, I have no more to teach you." They have to go find another violinist to teach them. I'm like that in chess; I know how the pieces move, I can teach you the basic game of chess, but after that, you need to find another teacher. The last time I played chess, I lost to a second grader and she laughed at me. So with this teacher, I'll teach you how they move, now to find somebody else.

But then He comes down to this one that's really really important. Correcting somebody else's faults without looking at our own. The splinter in their eye; the wooden beam, the 2 x 4 in ours. How many self-help books area out there? Self-help in religion, self-help in losing weight, self-help in getting your self-esteem, self-help in everything. Yet, time and time again we find that these people are worse off than the people reading the book. My than the other person that you are correcting. This goes along with the judging theme because you have to be very careful about that. So Jesus is saying, "Correct yourself, fix yourself before you try and fix somebody else." Then of course, He goes back to what Sirach said, "Out of a good person comes good fruit; out of a bad person comes bad fruit." The mouth will tell you where the heart is.

Jesus put together a whole bunch of interesting sayings so that we have time to think about, "Oh, okay, what do I need to do to be more perfect, to be closer to God?" This whole sermon on the plain, last week and this week, makes a great examination of conscious. Why do I say that? What's coming up this week? Ash Wednesday, lent. This is a time to prepare to get closer to Christ, to try and be more holy. It's not a time to give up peanut butter and chocolate and that kind of thing. It's a time t be holier and get closer to Christ. I still haven't figured out how giving up chocolate makes you holier. You give up peanut butter and you're irritated; your favorite food is now gone. People around you will be like, "Go back to peanut butter." Chocolate, it's like you give up chocolate, you get irritated, eat some chocolate, it will be good for your hormones. My friend in Tucson, always gives up beer for lent, and he becomes mean and nasty and his family hates him. They say, "Please God, get to Easter so Dad becomes his own good, nice self again." We have to be careful in what we are doing or giving up or taking on. It's a good idea to have a good examination of conscious, looking at the scriptures and saying, "What do I need to become a better person, to become more holy, to become closer to Christ?"

We have two services on Ash Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

God bless you.