

## The 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time — September 29, 2019

Some powerful readings again for our reflection and study, and hopefully an integration into our daily lives. So you have heard the readings ..... What stood out to you ? Did you hear anything special in any one of those readings where the Lord may just be prompting you ..... encouraging you ..... maybe to change your ways ..... or to, as our study book (*Walking the Disciple's Path*) and our Small Group Process invites us : “Surrender Your Nets” ???

That was a wonderful and enlightening chapter ..... Right ? What are some of the things I need to surrender in order to more clearly be in harmony with Him .... to really choose to be a disciple? What previous ‘Nets’ ..... behaviors, attitudes, actions, may I need to let go of in order to really follow Him? This week’s chapter builds beautifully on the last chapter — “Live as a Blessing” ..... How can I live as a blessing in a world of so much depravity ? That is a huge question ! And that is the core issue of the Gospel !

How can I really live as a Disciple of Jesus in a world that is so absorbed with self ..... what I have .....what I own, what I have created, what I have built-up ?..... How can I trust that it will not be taken away from me — by the Government, by the enemy, by the collapse of things around me .... the market, the economic issues of the world, the natural disasters, by death itself ? ..... How can I protect what is mine ..... keep all enemies outside ?

The reality is ..... I cannot ..... but that doesn’t keep me from trying. It tends to do nothing of value for me except .... cause stress, high blood pressure, heart related issues, and a rather general deterioration of good health.

So here is the big question — How do the scriptures help me to navigate these perilous seas? How do I ‘Surrender my Nets’ and

trust a relationship with Him ? How do I live as a Blessing?  
(Chapter 2) Primary answer ..... not easily !

In this next chapter of the book, Linda Rooney does a marvelous job of painting a picture for us. She begins with Jesus' core teaching 'The Sermon on the Mount.' Here, Jesus sets out His Plan ..... His Vision, as it were, for all would-be disciples. We tend to read it as one great sermon. But, the great scholars agree that it was not a sermon given in one setting, but rather a collection of all of the great speeches, and teachings, summarized here.

This makes perfect sense. In fact, the first 12 verses of His presentation summarize everything that He wants us to understand about what it means to enter into a relationship with Him !

If ..... and it is a Large 'IF' ..... I could get my head, and my heart, around everything He is telling me in 'The Beatitudes' ..... I have all of the ingredients for what it means to have, and to live, in relationship with Him. It is about 'Living a Blessed Life.'

There are 8 attitudes that He deals with, and Linda Rooney indicates they are all important. But, the first one He deals with is the appropriate foundation for all of the others..... Blessed (Happy) are 'The Poor in Spirit' the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. She paints a marvelous picture of the fishermen who had 'surrendered their nets,' now become disciples, and how bewildered they are as they hear such teaching. We, too, can become bewildered by such teaching ! He is not blessing 'poverty' or the 'poor' ..... He is Blessing an attitude of not being so self-absorbed, and not so attached to my stuff, my things, my possessions, my way of doing things.

But He is blessing a Spirit that has surrendered to the reality that all is Blessing, everything I have is given, everything I have earned

has come as a result of His benevolence in my life. I really own nothing ..... I am merely a steward ..... it is all transitory .....It is all His .... and it is given for the building up of His Kingdom ..... not mine. Now I can choose to have perspective ..... Vision for my future !

Let's look at it this way : Life is a journey .... a continuum. Where you are on this continuum makes a huge difference ..... Right ??? If you are on the 20% percentile, you may look a whole lot different, and act a whole differently, from a person that is in the 70% .....

Right ? Now, let's do a little transposing ..... here is my trusty Continuum (a yard stick). If love is the primary objective of the Christian Journey, the Christian Life ..... Now let's agree on that first ..... Is that true? ..... Is that acceptable as a base line ?

Ok, so what is the other end of the perspective? I say apathy .....

Apathy — — — — — Love

I believe apathy keeps more people out of love than any other single item ! We may hate, despise, be vengeful, resentful, angry, unwilling to forgive, and we may choose not to love ..... but all of these realities were preceded by an apathy. 'I DON'T CARE'

Now, we can better understand the Scriptures, the teachings of Jesus. Look at today's Readings : We have the prophet Amos as we had last week .... One of the Classical prophets ! He is speaking to the people of Israel living in the area of Jerusalem 'the complacent of Zion.' The Assyrians, who lived in what is nowadays Northern Iraq, had already destroyed the Northern Kingdom and those in the South didn't seem to care (APATHY)

Do we not care about what is happening around us ? Why?

The Gospel brings the same theme to the core ..... a very seemingly uncomplicated parable ..... It is easy for us to read, to hear, and even think we have the answer to the challenge posed ! We say its another Rich Man / Poor man Parable ! We get it ..... the Rich man is Bad, and the poor man is Good ! Not so fast ..... It is much more than that!

It is a parable that Jesus invited us to apply in our own lives.

It is not unlike the 3 parables we had 2 weeks ago:

1. The Good Shepherd ..... His relentless search for each one of us.

2. The Lost Coin ..... and the threat to the lady's marriage.

3. The Prodigal Son ..... one son who squanders the inheritance.

The other who desires to hoard the inheritance.

The major flaw in the rich man was not that he had riches, but rather that he was too absorbed in his riches to even observe the poor man right in front of him with such needs. A little sharing would have made an extra ordinary difference. His Apathy toward the one in need was the issue !

In what ways may I need to surrender the nets of Apathy in my life that I may 'Live as a Blessing'? ( Chapter 2)

—Fr. Gerry Hurley