

Sunday Message

21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year C • 24 August 2025 • Psalter Week 1



Today's readings are about inclusiveness, about the open, all-embracing, nature of the kingdom of God. It's a place where all are welcome.

Jesus is making his way to Jerusalem when someone asks him to estimate how many will be saved. But he says that this is the wrong question. The real question is not "how many?", but "how?". How does one get into the kingdom?

Jesus then offers advice on how to enter. The kingdom is like a narrow door, he says. The door is not so wide that anyone can just walk through. Because it is narrow, individuals will have to make an effort to get through it.

Nor does the door remain open indefinitely. Like any respectable establishment, the kingdom has a closing time. It's no good coming after hours. Some make desperate attempts to persuade the host to let them in. They claim a spurious relationship with him, saying that they ate and drank with him, that they heard him speak. But the Lord is not impressed with these superficial claims to friendship. Casual acquaintance is no substitute for true discipleship.

The pain of exclusion is made worse for the latecomers when they see how easy it is to gain entry. Almost anybody can get in. Inside there are rich and poor, men and women, people of every background from every corner of the globe. Membership of the kingdom is open to anyone. The only requirement is to hear the word of God and keep it.

Today's first reading from the book of Isaiah makes the same point. This book was written after the Jews returned from years of exile in the foreign city of Babylon. They were perhaps tempted to consider themselves favoured by God, superior to others, and to think that no other nation shared their privileges as God's chosen people.

But Isaiah has a surprise for them: God will create a new people that will include outsiders and not just the people of Israel. These people will be invited to come to the Holy City and some will even become priests in the new temple. Membership is open to everyone, irrespective of race or background. It's a broad vision of inclusiveness.

The lesson of today's readings is obvious. God wants us to share eternal life in the kingdom. It is an open invitation extended to all, but we can't presume entry. We can't take it for granted. We must choose to belong. A seat in the kingdom requires that we do our best to live up to our baptismal calling. It requires that we remain faithful to Christ and his Good News, every day of our lives. ■

REFLECT

There's nothing worse than being excluded from something, especially if you feel you should have been invited. Many friendships have ended because of a failure to invite somebody to a wedding or other celebration. Those not invited feel hurt, snubbed, let down. It's a wound that takes a long time to heal, or may never heal at all.

In today's Gospel Jesus talks about people being excluded from the kingdom of God, and how they will feel left out in the cold. No matter how hard they try to get in, they are refused entry. The door will remain closed to them.

It sounds harsh, but there is a difference between those not invited to a party and the individuals Jesus is talking about. The difference is that everyone receives an invitation to the feast in God's kingdom. Those who end up being excluded are those who choose to exclude themselves, who snub the invitation. By not being faithful to Christ and his teaching, they choose to cut themselves off from the kingdom of God. When the door is closed to them, they will have only themselves to blame. ■

SAY

"Lord, help me to be faithful to you, so that I will be able to enjoy eternal life in your heavenly kingdom. Amen."

DO

Think about the choices you make every day, and whether or not they bring you closer to God.

PRAY

Pray for Christians throughout the world, that they will grow in the love of God, and so will be found worthy of a place in God's kingdom.

LEARN

Everybody is invited to the feast of God's kingdom.

The key to our salvation is that we hear the word of God and keep it.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*Turn your ear, O Lord, and answer me;
save the servant who trusts in you, my God.
Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all the day long.*

COLLECT

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful
to unite in a single purpose,
grant your people to love what you command
and to desire what you promise,
that, amid the uncertainties of this world,
our hearts may be fixed on that place
where true gladness is found.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIRST READING Isaiah 66:18-21

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

Thus says the LORD:

'For I know their works and their thoughts,
and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues.
And they shall come and shall see my glory,
and I will set a sign among them.
And from them I will send survivors to the nations,
to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow,
to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away,
that have not heard my fame or seen my glory.
And they shall declare my glory among the nations.
And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations
as an offering to the LORD,
on horses and in chariots and in litters
and on mules and on dromedaries,
to my holy mountain Jerusalem,' says the LORD,
'just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel
to the house of the LORD.
And some of them also
I will take for priests and for Levites,' says the LORD.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 117(116):1. 2. R. Mark 16:15

R: Go into all the world and proclaim the good news.

Or Alleluia.

1. O praise the Lord, all you nations;
acclaim him, all you peoples! *R.*
2. For his mercy has prevailed over us;
and the faithfulness of the LORD endures for ever. *R.*

SECOND READING Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

Brothers and sisters: Have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.' It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL John 14:6

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the way, and the truth, and the life, says the Lord.

No one comes to the Father except through me.

R: Alleluia.

GOSPEL Luke 13:22-30

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

At that time: Jesus went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying towards Jerusalem. And someone said to him, 'Lord, will those who are saved be few?' And he said to them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, "Lord, open to us", then he will answer you, "I do not know where you come from." Then you will begin to say, "We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets." But he will say, "I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!" In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O Lord, who gained for yourself a people by adoption through the one sacrifice offered once for all, bestow graciously on us, we pray, the gifts of unity and peace in your Church. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*The earth is replete with the fruits of your work, O Lord;
you bring forth bread from the earth
and wine to cheer the heart.*

Or

*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
has eternal life, says the Lord,
and I will raise him up on the last day.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Complete within us, O Lord, we pray, the healing work of your mercy and graciously perfect and sustain us, so that in all things we may please you. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.