

March Cell Group Teaching
Reflections on the Last Seven Words of Christ
Word six: Disappointment
"It is finished" (Jn 19: 30)

Lectio Divina: John 19 30 and Matthew 6: 24-34

It seems only fitting that we reflect on the second to last word as we approach Lent. The readings for this last week in ordinary time remind us of two important lessons: first, keeping Christ at the center of our lives and second, while we are to live in the world, we cannot become consumed and preoccupied with our lives—we must keep our eyes fixed on Christ. As James Martin noted, it is helpful to meditate on the physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering Christ endured. To quote James Martin "...there is another suffering that we may overlook: the suffering of wondering whether his 'work' would continue after his death." There certainly can be some suffering in seeing something come to end and it is from this perspective that we can meditate on Christ's words "it is finished." Many scholars take this to mean that Christ had completed what He came to do; that he had completed His mission. There is another way to approach this. Perhaps some of you have thought to yourselves "I've done all that I can do, and I can't do any more." This may strike us with a hint of disappointment or perhaps helplessness. When Christ said "it is finished" He did so with a faith that He had accomplished His saving mission on Earth. We can pause here and ask ourselves do we share a similar faith, or is this more of a struggle for us?

I suspect that we don't have to think too hard about situations in our life that didn't end the way we had anticipated. Perhaps we didn't get into the college we wanted to, or the project and work failed to live up to expectations despite all our hard work. The

examples could be endless. At the moment of disappointment, what crossed your mind? Maybe you echoed the words of Christ and said “its over.” Often times the next question we think of is what do we do now? This is a perfectly fair question, and perhaps it was one Christ asked Himself what will happen to my disciples when I’m gone? To quote James Martin again “would [the disciples] continue to strive to live as he did? Would they put into practice his words? Would they believe in the miracles they had witnessed? Would they love one another?” These aren’t unreasonable questions, in fact it’s perfectly natural to wonder what the next move should be after a disappointment. However, our task should be to not let wonder turn into worry. This is best done by having a trust in Jesus but this takes time and it can be a struggle in itself. If you look through the Old Testament we can see plenty of examples of people not trusting God. This has been a problem from the very beginning with Adam and Eve. This distrust of God is part of our fallen nature and this is precisely why Christ came to redeem us and give us eternal life.

In the readings for the last Sunday in ordinary time before Lent, Jesus cautions His disciples in the following manner:

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink,

or about your body, what you will wear.

Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

Look at the birds in the sky;

they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns,

yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are not you more important than they?

Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span?

Why are you anxious about clothes?

Learn from the way the wild flowers grow.

They do not work or spin.

But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor

was clothed like one of them.

If God so clothes the grass of the field,
which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow,
will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith?
So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?'
or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?'
All these things the pagans seek.
Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.
But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given you besides.
Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself.
Sufficient for a day is its own evil.”

Jesus knew what he was taking about. He knows that our minds turn to daily concerns and to test God by saying something along the lines of “if you’re there...” This is precisely how the evil one tempted Christ in the desert. Jesus grounded his response to Satan’s temptations in scripture. He rebuked the evil one by saying that man does not live by bread alone and that one should not put God to the test. Christ Himself gave us the blueprint to resist the urges to worry too much on worldly concerns. This is not to say that these are trivial concerns. The fact of the matter is our lives are busy.

We don't have all the time we need, but we have all the time there is. Are we open to letting Christ order our day? In other words, are we putting Him at the center of our lives or are we too distracted? Christ was able to proclaim that His work on earth was finished. This Lent, let us ask ourselves are we carrying out His work in our lives? This is a struggle for me, because I tend to worry about the day-to-day struggles of life. I have to read these Gospel passages and ask myself if my worrying does any good. When you do God’s work, God will take care of you. Are we doing God’s work, or are we too fixed on your busy schedules? Christ on the Cross gives us hope, but let us not forget that He also understands where we are coming from. We have a God who loves us unconditionally and understands our toils and sufferings. He went through many of

them Himself. He wants us to trust Him. This can be difficult and Christ knows this. A prayer I say is a simple phrase “Jesus I trust you.” I say this on my rosary beads when I feel particularly susceptible to a lack of trust in God. There will be times when trusting in God is difficult. This is when we need to pray for the grace to have more trust. This Lent, think about what you can do to grow in your relationship with Christ. This may involve some form of penance. Or you could read more scripture (a good starting point would be the Gospels starting with Mark, Matthew, Luke, then John).

Questions for discussion

1. Share with each other (if you feel comfortable doing so) what you plan to do for your lenten journey.
2. What are some of the obstacles in your life which keep you from trusting in God?
3. What difficulties have you encountered in being the hands and feet of Christ? In other words, are you carrying out Christ’s mission. If so, how?