

A Short Teaching on A Way Forward  
by Deacon Gerry Palermo

Greetings on the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Readings: IS 8:23—9:3; PS 27:1, 4, 13-14; 1 COR 1:10-13, 17; MT 4:12-23

A Tale of Two Cities opens this way: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity” (Charles Dickens, opening). We are living in such a world. The Church teaches A Way Forward.

The readings today are anchored theologically on the highest understanding of the Day of Midian (Is 9:3). The Gospel tells the story of the selection and conversion of the first four Apostles (Peter & Andrew and James & John). Simple, unassuming, honest men going about their fishing selected by Jesus to live by his teaching in their synagogues to proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people. (Matt 4:23b). This is the purpose of the Messiah: Non-violent conversion, healing body/soul and returning to the Lord.

The Day of Midian contains the marvelous story of Gideon wanting to destroy camp of Midian with his 32,000 soldiers. God had another idea: “You have too many soldiers” (Jg 7:2). In a two step selection process the Lord has Gideon reduce his troops to only 300 men (22,000 were fearful and self-dismissed, 9,700 drank water in a careless way). The 300 - passed the final test by drinking their water while remaining alert and ready. The best of the best warriors. Ready to slaughter an enemy that so fills the land they are like locusts there are so many!

How did the Lord wage this war? Not by sword but by Horns, Torches and empty Jars. Using these simple tools the enemy fled in fear and only the two princes were slain (Oreb and Zeeb). The enemy, actually, were relatives through Abraham and Keturah. God preserves all. What is the Gospel understanding of this? The horn is the Word of God. The torch is the Light of Christ. The empty jars, they shattered upon the ground, is the false promises of a life of economics, self-interests and self-righteousness.

The Apostle Paul reminds even in the beginning ‘Christians’ were not like Christ. Self-righteous, Paul warns you even now, do not act with the wisdom of human eloquence that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning (1 Cor 1:17b) and it is an abomination unto the Lord. Do you quote to harm? Stop lying to yourself. It is not hard to see your seething evil.

God quotes to bring new life. Horns, Torches and empty Jars – Word, Light and rejection of the emptiness of economics – these are the tools of God. This is the Way Forward. Pray don’t prey.

Peace be with you.

Deacon Gerry