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Thursday's Gospel: Seeing with Jesus' Eyes

Gospel for Thursday in the 16th
Week of Ordinary Time, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 13:10-17*)

The disciples came and said to Jesus,
“Why do you speak to them in
parables?”

And he answered them, “To you it
has been given to know the secrets of
the kingdom of heaven, but to them
it has not been given. For to him who
has will more be given, and he will
have abundance; but from him who

has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says:

‘You shall indeed hear but never understand,

and you shall indeed see but never perceive.

For this people’s heart has grown dull,

and their ears are heavy of hearing,

and their eyes they have closed,

lest they should perceive with their eyes,

and hear with their ears,

and understand with their heart,

and turn for me to heal them.’

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

Commentary

The disciples ask Jesus why he speaks in parables. Our Lord tells them that his preaching is about “the secrets of the kingdom of heaven,” which are difficult for people to understand directly. That is why he uses figurative language, with images that are familiar to the listeners and that refer to the mysteries of the kingdom in a veiled way.

In his explanation to the disciples, Jesus says: “to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away” (v. 12). These words could surprise us since they seem unfair. But what Jesus is saying is that whoever refuses to receive the Gospel and grace with good will becomes incapable of understanding it and receiving more. In contrast, those who willingly let themselves be transformed by God’s word – which is what the disciples did – not only receives the grace of conversion, but are ready to receive even more grace.

Jesus’ quotation from Isaiah is also surprising: “lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them” (v. 15). In reality, our Lord is resorting to irony here, in order to

lament that his listeners are fulfilling to the letter the prophecy of Isaiah, despite our Lord's eagerness to save them. For although many people witnessed the miracles that Jesus worked and perhaps had more capacity than the Twelve to understand his words, they freely turned a deaf ear to his message and fell into voluntary blindness.

In our daily lives, we too may fail to understand a teaching of our faith and the moral law, or an action that pains us and seems unfair. On these occasions, let us not put our trust in our own understanding but in our Lord's invitation to raise our eyes to Him and deepen our supernatural outlook. When we fail to understand something, let us ask the Holy Spirit for light. The disciples too failed to understand everything. The deep and liberating message contained in Jesus' parables can only be grasped

fully by those who put all their trust
in our Lord.

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