

## Sexagesima Sunday, February 7, 2021

Isaiah 40:21-31, 1 Corinthians 9:16-23, Mark 1:29-39, Psalm 147:1-12, 21c

Perhaps I should begin this morning by wishing you a Happy Sexagesima Sunday and then quickly explain what that means. It's a very old-fashioned title for this Sunday of the year. I should admit that all priest secretly enjoys putting Sexagesima on Church bulletins for the salacious effect it has on the ear. As naughty as it sounds, it means "60 Days until Easter" in other words, the 40 days of Lent are not far away. It's a kind of countdown. Next Sunday is Quinquagesima Sunday, but that isn't quite as fun.

The first reading we're about to hear is a creation story from the prophet Isaiah. To be honest, of all the various creation stories in the Bible, I like this one so much better than the one in Genesis. The one in Genesis kind of kind of irritates me with "On the first day God did this, said it was good. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, God did that and saw that it was good. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day,....etc. I have the same irritation I have when I have to sit through the seemingly endless verses of "On the twelfth night of Christmas". My impatience goes into overdrive.

But this one from Isaiah delights me. It's mostly interrogative, a series of questions from God: "Haven't you known? Haven't you heard? Hasn't it been told you since the Foundations of the Earth, that God created this cosmos". It's all very Lord of the Rings. I love it. God sits above the circle of the Earth; God is outside over circle of death and violence. God can see all of us on Earth and we look like grasshoppers.

The grasshopper bit seems a little insulting, yet, I suspect there's some truth to it. Standing at the top of the Eiffel tower, or atop the St. Louis Arch, I had the experience and unique perspective that people can look like ants.

And that might be insulting if it stopped there. But the reading will go on to show in fact the whole Bible will go on to show just how much each and every grasshopper or ant means to God, who calls every one of them by their name.

I especially love the question God asks us: "To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? Asks the Holy one.

Haven't you known all along? Haven't you heard all along? Lift up your eyes and see the Creator, right in front of us all along.

Now, that first reading will give us a great and beautiful reminder of the Big picture, the literally, cosmic big picture of God as our Creator, who loves every one of us even though we have short small lives in many ways. But those who serve this Creator God, known by name, will receive a remarkable promise of renewed strength from God, even promising that we matter a great deal and that with God's help you will "mount up with wings like eagles."

The Gospel of Mark that we're about to hear is also going to remind us that we may look like ants or grasshoppers, but that everyone of us matters a great deal to the creator.

St. Peter's old mother-in-law is sick with a fever and dying. Yet as soon as the creator Jesus gets home from church, he walks in the door and goes straight to her, touches her, holds her hand and lifts her up and she is instantly healed.

What happens next almost sounds sexist because it says "she was healed and instantly started to serve them. But we mustn't forget that she could serve because the Creator was serving her. The Creator serves all of us. Should it then surprise us that a follower of Jesus would want to serve others rather than have her ego take center stage after a miraculous healing. Jesus doesn't need his ego inflated for healing. The creator doesn't need the Ego inflated for creating the cosmos, God just gets on with serving each one of us and we should copy God like St. Peter's mother-in-law. We should serve each other.

But the Gospel won't stop there. In fact, we're going to hear how Christ served just about everyone in that town that day, healing every single person who came to him and he will do the same for us, because we aren't just nameless grasshoppers to him.

But serving and healing all of us and all our needs took something out of him. When the Creator became human and dwelt among us, he was limited by human weakness and got tired. Sleep wasn't enough to re-charge Jesus. I'd ask you especially to take note of what did re-charge God.

"In the early morning while it was still very dark, he got up and went outside to a place where he could be alone and he prayed. Rest alone isn't enough to keep us from fainting. We also need Prayer. If God needed prayer, why should we think we don't?"

Have you not heard? Have you not known? So now, on this not-so-salacious Sexagesima Sunday, anticipating the celebration of the Resurrection in 60 days, let us hear and know what the creator is asking each of us to remember and do.