

**Homily for the 28th Sunday of Ordinary Time
Year C
Saturday, October 8, 2016**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, IL**

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: At the conclusion of the Gospel that we just heard, the deacon said simply, “The Gospel of the Lord,” to which we all responded by proclaiming, “Praise to you, Lord, Jesus Christ.” Since we say that response routinely at every Mass as a matter of ritual, we may do so without giving it much thought. So perhaps it is good for us to pause and reflect: why do we give praise to our Lord, Jesus Christ, upon hearing the Gospel? What comes to mind when you hear the word, “Gospel”? We hear this word used often enough, such as when someone says that they preach the Gospel, or when a person says they want to live according to the Gospel. But what do people really mean when they say such things?

The very word “Gospel” itself means, “The Good News.” But, we might ask: what good news?

Gospel has come to be a code for “doing the right thing” or “living a morally good life.”

St. Paul from our first reading sums up very succinctly what the Gospel truly means. Listen to what he says: Beloved, Gospel does not mean primarily something ethical, something about “doing the right thing.” Knowledge of what is the right thing to do follows from the meaning, but that isn’t the primary meaning.

It is, very simply, a declaration about a very particular person, born into a Jewish family in the 1st century, named Jesus. This man bears a remarkable title: in Greek, *Christos*. This word means the “anointed one” or “the savior.” So for St. Paul, one of the earliest preachers, this Jesus as the anointed one is the focus of what he means by “The Good News.” The Good News is about Him, this person named Jesus. It is a claim, it is a declaration about Him. What is the claim? That He has been raised from the dead, and that His resurrection holds out the promise of eternal life for those who follow His way.

That is the Good News.

Everything about Christianity revolves around and comes back to that claim. Our understanding of ourselves, our world, and about God Himself comes from that claim.

So then, what is the first implication of this claim? It is that God's love is more powerful than anything that is in the world. St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans that nothing could ever separate us from the love of God. But how could Paul know that?

Saint Paul knew that because he was convinced that God has conquered the powers of darkness, even the power of death itself, through the resurrection of Christ from the dead. God's love is more powerful than anything that is in the world, more powerful than sickness, more powerful than evil, even more powerful than death. That is the Good News!

So what is the second implication of the Good News? It is contained in the word, *Christos*, meaning the anointed one. Kings in the Old Testament were anointed, therefore, Christ is a king. Because Christ has been raised from the dead, He has become the rightful King of the world.

We read in the New Testament that Christ is Lord. That's a common term that St. Paul uses in reference to Jesus. Jesus is the one to whom we owe our final allegiance as Lord.

Why?

Because he has been raised from the dead! He has been given this authority by his Father. It is now Jesus to whom we owe our final allegiance.

We have a loyalty to Christ above anyone else.

Listen to what St. Paul also writes: "Such is the Gospel, for which I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal."

St. Paul wrote this letter from prison. He was thrown into prison because he was declaring that his loyalty was to Christ above all others. St. Paul's loyalty to Christ above all others led to his imprisonment and death.

What about us?

If we proclaim Christ as Lord, then that stands as a challenge to all else that would seek our final allegiance.

How thoroughly do we stand in opposition to the powers of the world?

To say that Jesus is Lord is to say that he must dominate every aspect of our lives. The Latin word for "Lord" is "*Dominus*." The word "dominate" comes from "*Dominus*." In other words, what dominates our lives is whatever or whoever has lordship over us. So we should examine

our consciences and ask: does Jesus have lordship over every aspect of our lives? If we say that we pay attention to him when we worship on Sundays, then that's not enough. It is not enough to say that he is the most important religious figure in my life.

Jesus as Lord means he was raised from the dead and therefore he must dominate our lives. He has a complete claim on our lives.

Now, here is the final implication of the Gospel. St. Paul tells us that "if we persevere, we shall also reign with him." Jesus is Lord, but those who accept his Lordship also participate in his governance of the world. We co-rule, so to speak, with Jesus in the great work of transforming the world. Our participation in that transformation of the world takes place through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Ultimately, we transform the world by proclaiming Christ as Lord to the world through all that we do, and we trust that Christ will transform us in return. This is a great gift for which we owe a debt of thanks to our Lord.

We come to church in need of healing. We are suffering in many ways—physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually—and we long to experience the merciful, healing embrace of Jesus, who restores our broken

natures to blessed wholeness, so that we can go forth from here to touch the lives of others in need of God's love.

When Naaman, commander of the Syrian army, was healed of his leprosy, as we heard in our first reading today, he returned to the prophet Elisha, "the man of God," full of gratitude, giving praise to the Lord. In today's Gospel, Jesus heals ten lepers, but only one, a Samaritan, returned, first "glorifying God in a loud voice," then "he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked Him." By healing this foreigner, Christ our Lord shows that He extends His saving power to everyone, including us. Like Naaman and the one who returned to give thanks, the least we can do is give praise to the Lord, and say thank you, which is precisely what we do in this Eucharist.

May God give us this grace. Amen.