

# Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year B

## Tenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

### **First reading:**

(Genesis 3.9-15, 20)

*The Aftermath of the Fall*

The story of the Fall is an analysis of human temptation and sin as it always happens, rather than a historical account of what happened once long ago, when human beings first evolved on earth.

Sin brings shame on us: we do our best, like both the man and the woman, to blame someone else, but in the end we know we are defenceless and naked before God. We know that we deserve our penalties, but the wonderful thing about the biblical story is that God continues to care for us: he himself thoughtfully sews clothes for the man and the woman to hide their embarrassment. More important, God promises that evil will not triumph for ever.

The penalties of hard labour and pain come not from divine vindictiveness, but from human sinfulness: we are no longer in perfect harmony with God. If we were in harmony with God our confidence in him would spare us the pain.

The reading pairs with the gospel reading, since it introduces Satan, the Tempter. The final bit is a 'Just So Story' of the animal world, explaining how the sinewy snake came into being: the proud, fiery serpent lost its legs and was reduced to being a mere big worm.

### **Question:**

*What does the story teach us about human sin?*

### **Second reading:**

(2 Corinthians 4.13-5.1)

*The Weight of Glory*

Is this an older Paul, who feels that he is failing ('this human nature of ours falling into decay'), and is looking forward to death, or rather to the weight of glory at the Resurrection?

In last Sunday's reading, he was positive enough, bouncing up again after the hard knocks received in the gladiatorial combats of life. Contrariwise, in Philippians 1.21, he is caught in a dilemma and writes: 'Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would be a positive gain.' Such is his faith and conviction of the saving power of Christ that he longs to be fully united with Christ. He looks forward to 'the weight of glory' that must be the goal of every Christian.

Glory is a specifically divine property. Moses was allowed to see the awesome divine glory, but the face of God he could not see. Isaiah was bowled over by his experience of the divine glory in the Temple, contrasting with his own awareness of his uncleanness. It seems that for Paul to feel 'the utterly incomparable, eternal weight of glory' is to be bathed in the divine presence and to enjoy eternally the company of God.

### **Question:**

*No one can see God and live, but how do you imagine the 'weight of God's glory'?*

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## **Gospel:**

*(Mark 3.20-35)*

### *Jesus Rejected*

The first stage of Jesus' ministry comes to an end. He is rejected as 'out of his mind' by his own family. Then he is rejected by the scribes as being in league with Beelzebul. Finally, his family again arrive, looking for him, and he turns to those who are listening to him as his true family. This all leads into the Parable of the Sower, which seems to be Jesus' reflection on his rejection by most people, and his fruitful acceptance by a small number of disciples.

It is, of course, significant that the scribes cannot deny that he drives out evil spirits. If even his enemies are forced to admit it, it must be true. The best they can do is sarcastically to ascribe his powers to the chief of evil spirits, here named 'Beelzebub' or 'Beelzebul' (two different versions of the text). The former name means 'lord of the flies', probably a mocking corruption of the latter, which means 'lord prince', the title of a local deity.

The whole scene presents an agonizing picture of the isolation of Jesus. In Luke's version of the scene, by a very slight adjustment, Jesus' mother and brothers are the prime example of those who hear the word of God and keep it.

## **Question:**

*Did Jesus feel disappointment and isolation as we do?*

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