

August 27, 2017 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lord, your ways are unsearchable!

Isaiah 22:19-23

Psalms 138:1-3, 6, 8

Romans 11:33-36

Matthew 16:13-20

In the first reading Isaiah speaks the Lord's words to Shebna, master of the palace who is to be replaced by Eliakim, who will now be given authority. The key of the House of David will enable him to make the just changes that are needed; when he opens, no one shall shut, when he shuts, no one shall open.



The Psalmist gives thanks, sings praises, and worships the Lord with all his heart. The Lord, who sees the lowly and does not forsake his creation, is kind and truthful and gives him strength. He heard his cry and rescued him from dangers not because the psalmist was necessarily virtuous but because Yahweh is always merciful.

In the second reading Paul emphasizes that the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God are unfathomable. No one knows the mind of the Lord, has been his counselor, or ever given him anything that needs repayment. God controls historical events and has a plan for their design, purpose, and fulfillment and he alone can understand and explain these happenings.

In the Gospel Jesus asks his disciples to list some current opinions about him: "Who do the people think I am?" There are a variety of answers but when the disciples are directly asked of their opinion, Peter responds, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." This, Jesus says, can only have been revealed by his heavenly Father. Now the Church is initiated and controls the keys to the kingdoms of heaven and earth.

All things are from the Father,
Are for the Son,
And through the Holy Spirit.

The words of Isaiah remind us that the Lord will replace those who use their authority in selfish and unproductive ways. The psalmist recognizes that the Lord is highly exalted but sees even the lowliest, and believes his strength comes through praise and worship. Paul indicates God's judgments are inscrutable and his ways unsearchable. Peter recognizes Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, and is given special authority by Jesus to open and close doors in heaven and on earth. At that time Jesus ordered the disciples not to tell anyone of this but now we are to tell everyone.

Jesus endeavors to adjust the thinking of the disciples with his questioning regarding the public estimate of him which undoubtedly the disciples had heard from others. He is thought of as the people's prophet and some even consider him to be one of the great prophets of the past who are to again appear in the end times. No one thinks of him to be the "Messiah," or "Christ," but now Peter, speaking for the Twelve, recognizes Jesus as the Messiah and is told not to tell anyone as this is to remain, for the time being, a strictly guarded secret of the inner circle of disciples.

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