

Homily 15th Sunday Year C 2022

Jesus is such a great teacher. He very rarely answers people's questions as in the gospel but helps them realise that they already have the answer. The lawyer asks two questions of Jesus and in both cases also provides the answer. Here's a story similar to the Good Samaritan

An emperor wanted answers to three questions in order to rule well:

1. What is the best time to do each thing?
2. Who are the most important people to work with?
3. What is the most important thing to do at all times?

Not receiving satisfying answers, the emperor decided to visit a wise hermit who lived in the mountains. The emperor, however, knew the hermit never left the mountains and was known to receive only the poor. He refused to meet people of wealth or power. So, the emperor disguised himself as a simple peasant. He ordered his attendants to wait at the foot of the mountain while he climbed up alone to speak to the hermit.

On arrival the emperor found the holy man digging his garden. When the hermit saw the stranger, he nodded his head in greeting but continued to dig. The labour was hard on the hermit, being an old man, he heaved and breathed heavily as he dug the ground. The emperor approached and said, "I have come to ask your help with three questions: When is the best time to do each thing? Who are the most important people to work with? What is the most important thing to do at all times?"

The hermit listened attentively, patted the emperor on the shoulder and continued digging. Taking pity on the hermit, the emperor said, "You must be tired. Here, let me give you a hand with that." The hermit thanked him, handed the emperor the spade, and sat down to rest. After he had dug two rows, the emperor stopped and again asked his three questions. The hermit still did not answer. Instead, he stood up and pointed to the spade and said, "Why don't you rest now? I can take over again." But the emperor continued to dig. An hour passed, then two. Finally, the sun began to set. The emperor put down the spade and said, "I came here to ask if you could answer three questions. If you have no answer, please let me know so that I can return home."

Just then the emperor was surprised by a man emerging from the woods, running wildly, and clutching at a wound in his stomach. On reaching the emperor he fell to the ground, groaning. Opening the man's clothing, the emperor and hermit saw that the man had received a deep gash.

The emperor cleaned the wound thoroughly. He used his own shirt to bandage it, but the blood completely soaked it within minutes. He rinsed the shirt out and bandaged the wound a second time and continued to do so until the flow of blood had stopped. At last, the wounded man regained consciousness. He asked for a drink of water. The emperor ran to the stream and brought him fresh water.

The hermit helped the emperor carry the man into the hut and lay him on the hermit's bed. Exhausted and injured, the man closed his eyes and fell asleep. Equally worn out from the long day of climbing the mountain and digging the garden, the emperor leaned against the doorway and very soon also fell asleep.

When he finally woke, the sun had risen over the mountain. For a moment the emperor forgot where he was and what he came here for. He looked over to the bed and saw the wounded man who looked around him in confusion. When he saw the emperor, he stared at him intently and said in a faint whisper, "Please forgive me."

"But what have you done that I should forgive you?" the emperor asked.

"You do not know me, your majesty, but I know you. I was your sworn enemy, and had vowed to take vengeance on you, because during the last war you killed my brother and seized my property. When I learned that you were coming alone to the mountain to meet the hermit, I resolved to surprise you on your way back and kill you. After waiting a long time and you did not reappear, I left my ambush to seek you out. But instead of finding you, I came across your attendants, who recognized me, giving me this wound. Luckily, I escaped and ran here. If I hadn't met you, I would surely be dead now. I had intended to kill you, but instead you saved my life! I am ashamed and grateful beyond words. If I live, I vow to be your servant for the rest of my life, and I will bid my children and grandchildren do the same. Please forgive me."

The emperor was overjoyed to be so easily reconciled with a former enemy. He not only forgave the man but promised to return all the man's property. He also sent his own physician and servants to wait on the man until he was completely healed.

Before returning to the palace the emperor, once again asked the hermit his three questions.

The hermit stood up and said. "But your questions have already been answered."

"How's that?" the emperor asked, puzzled.

"Yesterday, if you had not taken pity on my age and given me a hand with digging the garden, you would have been attacked by that man on your way home. Then you would have deeply regretted not staying with me. Therefore, the most important time was the time you were digging in the garden, the most important person was myself, and the most important pursuit was to help me."

"Later, when the wounded man ran up here, the most important time was the time you spent dressing his wound, for if you had not cared for him, he would have died and you would have lost the chance to be reconciled with him. Likewise, he was the most important person, and the most important pursuit was taking care of his wound.

"Remember that there is only one **important time** and that is **Now**. The present moment is the only time over which we have dominion. The most important person is always the person with whom you are, **who is right before you**, for who knows if you will have dealings with any other person in the future. The most important pursuit is **making that person, the one standing at your side, happy**, for that alone is the pursuit of life." by Leo Tolstoy

"Make me one with everything," says the Buddhist to the tofu hot-dog seller.

After receiving his tofu hot-dog, the Buddhist hands the seller a £20 note. The seller takes the money and begins helping the next customer. The Buddhist looks puzzled and asks the seller, "Where's my change?" The seller replies, **"Change comes from within!!"**