**Human and Divine Things**

**Jesus began to teach his disciples of his fate to come when all the elders, the priests and scribes would reject him and in three days he would rise again. This was difficult for the disciples to hear, and Peter took Jesus aside and reprimanded him.  I can understand why Peter and all the disciples were upset to hear the words Jesus spoke on that day.  Just imagine a few instances through history in which people would not have believed what was told to them about the future.  They would have scoffed at such outlandish ideas as these.**

**In the 19th century if a person had come up to a group of people and said someday there will be flying machines in the air, capable of flying fast for long stretches of time, the people listening to such a story would have laughed or told the person making the claim that he or she was crazy.  Or think of another person coming up to this group and saying the horse would be replaced by something called an automobile, which would run to many different and far-flung places without any horses. Again the people would have laughed and thought that person crazy.**

**Who can blame Peter for wondering why in the world was Jesus talking in such a negative and destructive way?  But Jesus answered Peter by saying, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”  It’s a sharp rebuke from Jesus, yet if he had tried to explain what he was saying, I doubt Peter would have understood no matter what Jesus had said. There were also the other disciples who didn’t understand any of the words Jesus had spoken.  No doubt Jesus’ best response to stop Peter from saying anymore was to shock him into silence.  The other disciples must have over heard Jesus’ response to Peter, and decided not to ask him any other questions.**

**Yet just like Peter, we all at times set our minds on human things rather than on divine things.  We live in this world, and at the most basic level, we need to have food, we need a place to sleep, a way to make money to help us survive.  For many people divine things must come second after the basic needs of just being human. Most of us can’t become desert Fathers and Mothers spending all our time in prayer and reflection. What then are we to do? The best we can do every day of our lives. When we even have one moment of time, we can offer up a small prayer.  All our prayers are heard, no matter how short.**

**Jesus said, take up your cross and follow me. Jesus also said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” I believe his cross can become lighter to carry because all we really need is a belief in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our deepening understanding of his love for us will make our cross grow lighter. In fact, the cross we bear will become lighter and lighter everyday as we journey in our deepening appreciation of the love Jesus offers us. Gratitude toward Jesus’ love can also help us understand that the cross we carry can be no burden at all. To live through the seasons of our lives in deep appreciation, and gratitude and love of Jesus, will bring us the grace of our Lord Jesus in abundance.**

**Jesus’ statements today can seem harsh and difficult to understand.  Yet remember what Jesus is facing as he turns his attention to the fate waiting for him in Jerusalem.  He will face many of his own people turning against him, scorning him and a painful death on a cross.  No wonder he wanted to make his disciples understand the words about his death and resurrection. How he wanted them to understand this life is not the end of anyone’s journey.  He wanted them to understand these words. “For those who want to save their lives will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it.” I can only say what these words mean to me and pray they might help all of us better understand what Jesus meant by them.  A quotation comes to mind as I contemplate these words from Jesus.  It’s a well-known saying written by Shakespeare,**  **“A coward dies a thousand deaths, a hero dies but once.”**

**Here is an example of what Jesus might be saying to us this morning. Fear is a great enemy in our trust and belief in Jesus.  Our faith can be chipped away when we fall into fear, because fear comes from the dark, never from Jesus.  In every generation there is always plenty to fear; today we could fear the pandemic day after day.  Yet every day we fall into fear takes us away from the love of Jesus.  Every day we allow ourselves to be in the clutches of fear, we die a little bit that day. If we can maintain our love of Jesus in our everyday lives, we will not have to die a thousand deaths.  We then only have one death, when we are taken up in the arms of the angels to be with Jesus.**

**We can attempt to never give into fear or any other negative emotion pulling us away from the love of Jesus.  We can attempt to not lose our lives day after day by remembering to keep Jesus, as  much we can, in the foreground of our lives.  I know this is not always an easy task.  But when I can keep the love of Jesus close to me, I find I don’t wander into negative spaces and places quite as often.**

**The words Jesus spoke were hard for Peter and the disciples to hear. They’re hard for us to hear. The rebuke Jesus gave to Peter was harsh.  Yet Jesus was attempting to prepare Peter and all his apostles for what lay ahead for him.  We can hear these words once a year to remind us the very center of our faith is Easter. While Jesus is in the wilderness, we spend forty days attempting in our human ways to be with him through that long, difficult time.  We are preparing and Easter, will come again to grace us all. Amen**