

Jesus wants leaders who lead

THE GOOD NEWS



GOD'S WORD ON EVERYDAY LIVING

By Father Paul Turner

trying to exercise the fledgling leadership Jesus was beginning to entrust to them.

But to Jesus' ears, they've got it all wrong. They seem more concerned about their self-importance than about the name of Jesus. The disciples are wearing the school colors, but they're complaining that non-students are wearing them too. Jesus, the good marketer, says leave them alone. The more people wearing your logo the better.

He goes on. Whoever does not act against us is for us. So what if they're not Christian? If they're not anti-Christian, they're part of the team. If someone just gives you an insignificant drink of water, relax. It's OK. They're with us.

THEN COMES these thundering admonitions: If your hand, foot, or eye cause sin, get rid of them. Why the strong language? Jesus wants leaders who will lead, whose sins will not bring themselves down nor lead others into sinful ways. He is so definite on this point that he chooses exaggerated language -- not to encourage self-mutilation, but rather to show that, as you would never cut off your own hand, so you should never lead anyone into sin. Christian leaders simply must set a good example. He won't have it any other way. You might call this Jesus' attempt at making an infallible statement.

Good example should begin with how the disciples treat each other. Disciples should have "salt" in themselves -- they should have flavor, preservative qualities, fire-starting properties -- and be at peace. They must demonstrate by their communion with one another that they are part of the Body of Christ.

How tragic it is when Christians spar with one another. We hurt the very cause we represent. How tragic that Christian Churches do not yet share communion with one another. How awful when one parish feels that it has to compete with another. How hurtful when one parish committee fights with another. How painful when a Christian family, the domestic Church, is severed by internal strife. This, Jesus cannot tolerate. The physically blind and disabled lead better lives.

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ONE LOOK AT the heart of next Sunday's Gospel (Mk 9:38-43, 45, 57-48) will provoke nervous laughter and the great disclaimer, "Well, he was only exaggerating."

Surely Jesus doesn't mean it *literally* that we should cut off our hands and feet, and pluck out our eyes if they cause us to sin. Not even biblical fundamentalists run around promoting self-mutilation.

It makes us feel better to think that Jesus was only exaggerating. But if, with that, we dismiss this passage like some pesky mosquito, we've ignored a point that Jesus obviously wanted to drive home by choosing the most outlandish language he could think of.

What's the big deal? Jesus is trying to turn his disciples into leaders. This really is a big deal for him. Remember, he has just begun his long journey from Caesarea Philippi in the north, where Peter proclaimed him the Messiah, to Jerusalem where he will be crucified. His days are numbered. He's got a Church to create. Its success will depend upon its leadership. He remembers that the first topic his disciples took up on the road to Jerusalem was who's the greatest. It's hard to imagine a more inappropriate beginning to Christian leadership. This really sticks in Jesus' craw.

NOW JOHN COMPLAINS to him that some other people are expelling demons in Jesus' name -- people who are not his disciples, and certainly not among the Twelve. Whoever these strange exorcists are, the disciples think they're out of line. So they rat on them to Jesus. Perhaps the disciples meant no harm by this report. Perhaps they were

Daily Scripture Readings

Twenty Fifth Sunday
in Ordinary Time
Sunday, September 18
Wisdom 2:12, 17-20
Psalms 54:3-5, 6-8
James 3:16 - 4:3
Mark 9:30-37

Monday, September 19
Proverbs 3:27-34
Psalms 15:2-5
Luke 8:16-18

Tuesday, September 20
Proverbs 21:1-5, 10-13
Psalms 119:1, 27, 30,
34, 35, 44
Luke 8:19-21

Wednesday, September 21
Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13
Psalms 9:2-5
Matthew 9:9-13

Thursday, September 22
Ecclesiastes 1:2-3
Psalms 90:3-5, 12:16, 17
Luke 9:7-9

Friday, September 23
Ecclesiastes 3:1-11
Psalms 144:1-4
Luke 9:18-22

Saturday, September 24
Ecclesiastes 5:1-7, 12:8
Psalms 94:1-4, 148:1-4
Luke 9:24-28

Twenty Sixth Sunday
in Ordinary Time
Sunday, September 25
Numbers 11:25-29
Psalms 110:1, 138:1-2
James 3:1-6, 12:16-18

September 25, 1994

Numbers 11:25-29

Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again. Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My lord Moses, stop them!" But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!"

James 5:1-6

Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you.

Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward. If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who are the people in your life who have the gift of healing?
2. What type of healing have you experienced in your life: physical, psychological, spiritual?
3. Have you witnessed the power of healing through persons of other cultures, traditions, religions other than your own? Please explain?
4. In what ways can you heal the wounded in your home, community, church and world?

Joanne Smith □