

Second Hand Preacher

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 17, 2016

Colossians 1:24-28

“...in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church, of which I am a minister in accordance with God’s stewardship given to me.” Those words of St. Paul can seem confusing. At first glance it might look like there is something imperfect about the way Jesus suffered. Paul was going to be able to make up for that. So is Paul more perfect in his suffering than Jesus? No I don’t think that is what he means to say.

Paul does have some importance. He is a minister of the Church. He is leading the church in being more faithful to Jesus. He wants their suffering to be meaningful. He wants their suffering to be connected to the suffering of Jesus. Jesus is perfect, but our suffering is not. We feel pity for ourselves. We suffer for motives that are not very pure. Paul wants to be the example of authentic suffering. He wants the Colossians to give everything to Jesus. Paul wants them to realize they are part of the body of Christ. This has both benefits and responsibilities. To suffer well is one of the responsibilities.

When we face hard times, Jesus will be there for us. This is what it means to be part of the Church. By our baptism, we are welcomed in to be a part of the mystery. Christ suffered, so we must suffer as well. This is part of discipleship. Being a disciple comes with a cost. Following Jesus is not always easy. Let us not lose focus on the great rewards. Heaven is of course a goal. This is where we are one with God forever. Being a Christian can also be an incredible journey. Living together in the Church has rewards. Not perfection, but there can be a real spirit to fellowship with those who believe. As members of the body of Christ, we have an obligation to be good stewards. Both the physical and spiritual needs of the church must be taken care of. This shows ownership. We do not earn salvation, but we can contribute to the making of the Kingdom of Heaven right here on earth.