

Lent II

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Date: 28 February 2021

Preacher: Fr. Paul Beutell

[0:00] For this is the will of God, even your sanctification. Words from this morning's epistle lesson in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen. We all know the Bible verse, John 3, 16. We hear it every week here at Mass in the comfortable words.

It states, So God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, and that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

When we think about this verse, we most often think in terms of our part in it, and its effect for us. And that's okay. Our part in this verse is to believe in him, to believe in Christ.

And the effect for believing in him is everlasting life. Of course, both are very important. What we cannot overlook, and what I want to focus on here, is the cause.

[1:06] I want to focus on what God the Father, by his Son Jesus, has given to us, in order that we can believe and obtain everlasting life.

The first part of that verse tells us what the Father has done, what he has given. He gave his only begotten Son. Let's think about that.

God the Father, the creator of heaven and earth, gave us, fallen away sinners, his only Son.

The word gave in Greek is didomi. It means to bestow, as when we give someone a gift.

When we give someone a gift, we let go of the item we give. We give it to them absolutely, totally, with no strings attached to do with as they wish.

[2:08] When the Father gave Jesus, this is what he did. He gave Jesus to the world. He gave him to us, totally, absolutely, for our sins.

And Jesus, out of love for his Father, who so loves us, became man, and absolutely, totally, gave all of himself for us, so we might have everlasting life.

We see this total giving most clearly while Jesus was hanging on the cross. First, he dismissed his spirit. And then his side was thrust through with a spear, where from out of the wound came a little blood and then water.

Jesus had given it all, spirit and body. He emptied himself for us. I bring all this to your attention to say the sanctification St. Paul calls us to in the epistle is not a series of things we do or don't do in exchange for greater blessings from God.

It is a call to have the mindset of Christ. And in Christ-like humility, give ourselves absolutely, totally to the Father, as Jesus did.

[3:34] Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 through 8 brings the absolute giving of Jesus together with the mindset that you and I are called to have. St. Paul writes, Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of man.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Essentially, sanctification is an act of love. It is you and I saying, I so love you, Father, that I, imitating Jesus, give my whole self to you, no matter what I may or may not receive in return.

It is the giving of oneself absolutely. It is the giving of oneself totally. For the Father to do whatever he determines will bring him most glory in Christ.

If we seek sanctification in order to earn salvation, as if we could actually do that, or to feel more Christian, which a lot of people, I think, try to do, then the giving of oneself is not absolute.

[5:05] We are holding something back, waiting to see how little we have to give. Or what we might gain from God along the way. I recall in a movie I watched where one of the characters said, it is the tightrope walker without a net that makes it to the other side.

This is true with sanctification. It is the one who abandoned themselves to the Father, who becomes truly sanctified. The one who does not have a plan B or an ulterior motive.

A good description of sanctification is given by St. Paul in 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, verses 8 through 11. It is bearing the glory of God in Christ in our earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power of God, of power may be of God and not of us, always caring about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. In the epistle, when St. Paul says we should abstain from fornication, not act upon concupiscence, which is our innate tendency to sin, or defraud others, he is telling us what sanctification looks like in a life abandoned to the Father in Christ.

As part of salvation, sanctification is worked out, not worked for. When we are absolutely given to the Father in Christ, we won't do such things.

[6:59] Because out of our absolute love for the Father and our abandonment to the Father and our absolute gratitude for the sacrifice of Jesus, we just wouldn't do that.

I think Jesus saw this kind of absolute giving of oneself in the Canaanite woman in this morning's gospel lesson. Though she came to Jesus asking him to heal her daughter, I think even if he had not, that woman still would have believed in him.

I think this is because of the things that she did and the words she said. Though she certainly believed what Jesus could do, she had no guarantee he would do it.

And yet she fell at his feet and worshiped him. Though she was not a daughter of Abraham, she trusted Jesus would have compassion on her and do what he thought was right and best.

As the lesson tells us, Jesus recognized the faith that she had in him. He said, Oh woman, great is your faith. Let it be to you as you desire.

[8:17] This is what Jesus wants to see in you and I. An abandoned faith in him. It doesn't have to be big. It only need be the size of a mustard seed.

But it must be absolute. We cannot have a net or a backup plan. When Jesus sees that in us and he knows our desire to be sanctified in him, he will make us whole.

So my brothers and sisters, we want to steer clear of thinking sanctification is something we earn by the efforts of our actions. As the college states, it is the Holy Spirit who keeps us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls.

So we are actively passive in sanctification. We are active in that we will be striving against sin in thought, word, and deed and producing godly fruit.

We are passive in that our striving is the working out of our abandonment to God, motivated by the inner working of the Spirit out of love to the Father in Christ.

[9:36] If we think we are being active in the sense of as I do this, God gives me that, we're off the mark. Instead, we must think, I give myself.

Period. The result of increased sanctification is not merely deliverance from acts of sin and increased and increased personal holiness. True.

Both will happen, thanks be to God. Sanctification is deliverance from self-reliance unto an absolute surrender to Jesus, whereby Christ becomes so manifested within us that we carry him about daily throughout this life until the day we obtain the promised eternal life to come.

Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.