

God's Permissive Will Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time Saturday, June 30, 2018 8:15 AM
Lam 2:2, 10-14, 18-19; Mt 8:5-17 (The First Martyrs of the Holy Roman Church)
(We need to respond to this very sad situation with compassion.)

“Your prophets had for you false and specious visions; They did not lay bare your guilt, to avert your fate; They beheld for you in vision false and misleading portents.”

It's rare that we actually look at the Book of Lamentations, and that's for a reason that's usually misunderstood. **The Book of Lamentations** of course is written in an idiom, a style, which is very alien to modern thinking, so we have a hard time getting into it. Like the entire Old Testament it cannot be taken literally. **It's full of meaning, but the meaning is not on the surface. The whole idea of lamentation is crying, weeping, for the state of humanity, for the state of society.**

Now the manner of speaking in the ancient world, in the Old Testament in particular, is whatever happened, happened because God wanted it to happen. Well that's true and false. It's true God allowed it to happen, but it's not true God wanted it to happen. **We in the Christian dispensation distinguish between the permissive will of God and the actual will of God; not everyone does.**

Now what actually is being lamented is not the actual will of God, but the result of the way people live. And God permits the consequences of our actions to overtake us. That in short is the meaning of the whole book. **God in his permissive will allows the consequences of our actions to overtake us.**

Now today many people are upset with the state of our country, and yet **many people foolishly blame politicians.** Some blame Republicans, some blame Democrats, but everyone blames somebody. This is a mistake. **Politicians are a reflection of the citizens.** And the truth that we have to see as citizens of another world, citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we have to see that **most of the citizens of the earth are in big trouble**—big trouble. **Western culture** on a whole is going downhill. It lacks value. It lacks meaning. It lacks purpose. It's all about self-indulgence, and it's very wounded: **deeply, spiritually wounded. And it isn't applying the remedies that God has provided.**

Two symptoms of what is wrong with our modern culture: one, the incredible success of a completely phony form of religion, **the big church evangelical form of Christianity**, which is in a fundamental way false because it's married to fundamentalism, which is a false reading. On the surface many fundamentalists say, and evangelicals and charismatics and Pentecostals and so on, who are in many cases very good people, very sincere people, and yet misguided, they say for example the Bible is inerrant, but in practice what they teach is simply whatever it is they feel like. They are not guided by any magisterium. They are not advised by any body of wisdom. They have no concern whatsoever for the upstanding apostolic tradition that is two thousand years old. This doesn't mean anything to them. **All that matters is what they think the Bible says to them right now.** And what is appalling is the astonishing popularity of this very false movement.

The other symptom of what is wrong with our country is **the growth of atheism among the so-called sophisticated.** Atheism of course is married to, wedded to, for life **the spirit of materialism.** It can't exist without it; it's one and the same with it. And yet materialism is such an empty, false, fatuous, superficial, and self-contradictory philosophy, it is amazing that people who hold to it consider themselves sophisticated, because they are not in any true spiritual sense; in fact **they lack all spiritual sense.** So here we are; that is the country we are living in; that is the time we are living in.

Now as disciples of Christ we must avoid any kind of mockery, derision. We have to avoid every kind of negativity. **We need to respond to this very sad situation with compassion.** That is what Jesus did; that's what the prophets did: compassion. The love of God is even now and here in our midst. And even this wayward, misguided civilization, so to speak, culture, society we are living in, so burdened with its own negativity, even this is still **the object of God's love and concern and care.** And if we are up to it, **we are his chosen representatives,** his, if you will, his chosen prophets, to offer not false and specious visions, but real ones and true ones; not to cover over guilt and shame, but rather to expose it **to avert the fate, the consequences, that come naturally by God's permissive will as a consequence of our actions.** So this is our vocation.