



I grew up in Chicago, and the Downtown Holiday season begins the day after Columbus Day. They don't do it to extend the shopping days as much as possible. Rather, the idea is to get the Christmas decorations up before the Autumn storms arrive. In sensing this major change of seasons, the entire City enters into a full-time state of anticipation and preparation.

Our Liturgical season is about to change, too. The Feasts of All Souls and All Saints remind us that the Ordinary liturgy is coming to its conclusion. In anticipation of and preparation for our next season, we review the parables, sayings, teachings and prophecies that Jesus delivered in the few days between his entry into Jerusalem and his Passion. The readings are chosen to remind us who he is, what he teaches, and to what we should aspire. In between now and the first Sunday of Advent, we encounter many examples of Jesus the Healer; Jesus the Teacher; and Jesus the Man.

For example, we will hear of the healing of the Bartimaeus. Though blind from birth, he saw that Jesus was a healer. Despite strong recriminations, he persisted in calling out to Jesus, was cured, and then followed him. Jesus also cured 10 lepers, only one of whom returned to thank him. He even cured in the Temple on the Sabbath to confront the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees. There are neither limits to nor conditions for his compassion. A most difficult example to follow.

Jesus the Teacher reveals himself most in his Parables. For example, he uses attendance at great royal banquet and participation in another wedding feast to discuss social conventions, courtesy and etiquette. But at a deeper level, he reveals that admission to the heavenly kingdom is reserved not for the elite, but for those who are humble and participate as citizens of the kingdom.

Perhaps his greatest teachings are summarized in the Beatitudes introduced at the beginning of his Sermon on the Mount. Not only do they suggest the daily interactions and challenges of living in the Kingdom, but they reveal the blessings of a living a life of compassion. The last Beatitude ominously predicts a

consequence of being Christian. His prediction of persecution introduces us to Jesus the Prophet.

In the parable of the fig tree, Jesus points out that we should be observant of signs and interpret them to anticipate the future. Not only does he elsewhere speak of apocalyptic end times, but he predicts the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem ... as well as the temple of his own body.

And what of Jesus the Man? He best defines himself in his Bread of Life sermon when he says,

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. ... For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day.

In an earlier reflection, we reviewed Faith, Hope, Trust, and Belief. One of the benefits of repeating our liturgical cycle is that we can experience the realization of a promise before it happens. In other words, Faith can become Belief and Hope can become Trust because we have already seen them unfold in the readings.

A famous prophesy from Isaiah will demonstrate this last point:

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:
The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son,
and will call him Immanuel.

Stay tuned, for this prophesy will be realized in Advent.

Can I get an Amen!?