

- 🎵🎵 *These times, they are a' changin'...* 🎵🎵

Just this past October, the Swedish Academy shocked the world by awarding the Nobel Prize in Literature to American singer-songwriter Bob Dylan, for “having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition.”

- Dylan’s Nobel Prize stirred fierce reaction which began almost immediately on social media and then continued in the traditional press.

- For me, I was reminded of one of Dylan’s own songs, “Idiot Wind” which has the following lyrics:

Now everything’s a little upside down

As a matter of fact the wheels have stopped

What’s good is bad, What’s bad is good

You’ll find out when you reach the top,

You’re on the bottom

- Our readings today are perfect for the climatic finish and dramatic conclusion of our message series.

- Taken as a whole, the point to the far bigger picture of the gentle, loving way God works: holding us in the palm of His hand, knowing what we need before we ask, seeking always to give it and to be close.

- Jesus Himself reminds us that God is closer to us than we could ever imagine, that we need only trust in Him and God will take care of us. That’s why God says not once, not twice, not three times, not even four times in our Gospel today, “Do not worry...” (I think that this Gospel was written expressly for me.)

- And St Paul teaches us how to do that, how to trust God and that God will provide for us: by giving away what God has given us.
- Because of God's love, all has been given to us (as we heard last week), we should be visibly recognizable as servants of Jesus Christ and as stewards, those who make present the mystery of God's love and mercy for others.
- In other words, Jesus is saying to each one of us: think bigger than your worries and problems. Think more about God and less about you.
- And this is, I think, the heart of the call for us: Think bigger. Think discipleship. Ask not what your God can do for you. Rather ask what you can do for your God. How recognizable am I as a servant of Jesus Christ?
- I have closed each homily of the last few weeks with the exhortation, Let's go make disciples. That rises to a clarion call now
- ***Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.***
 - As we conclude this message series on the discipleship, I want to focus on the four verbs on the Great Commission:
 - GO, MAKE, BAPTIZE, TEACH
 - There is an elegant simplicity to this call but I think we tend to complicate it because we understand all too well that Jesus asks a lot of us.

- Jesus starts with the command to go, to move out, to leave where we are and to go where we need to be, to be where God calls us.
 - Think for a moment about the scene of the Ascension, when God gives the Great Commission.
 - The disciples are there with Jesus. They have experienced the Resurrected Jesus, ate and drank and touched the one they had seen crucified.
 - They know their sins are forgiven, their abandoning Jesus in His hour of need. They have done great things in His Name and they know the power of His Love.
 - And now He is sending them out, beyond this comfortable place, beyond what they know, sending them out to difficult service and strong sacrifice. GO.
 - GO beyond your comfort zone, Go out from the safety and security and orderliness of doctrine and dogma and enter the messy world of sinfulness, of suffering, of despair.
- And then, MAKE DISCIPLES.
 - A disciple is someone who searches for Jesus, willing to be challenged and transformed, willing to accept salvation by offering the same to others. Once one knows the heart of Jesus, the call is to become an apostle, one who is sent to make other disciples
 - To **make disciples**, then is to **offer others the heart of Jesus**.
 - Offer a heart of love and acceptance if one disagrees with or is angry at or challenge you.
 - Offer a heart of forgiveness if one has hurt you. Offer a heart of strength and compassion if another is suffering and in need.

- Offer a heart of understanding if another is fearful and afraid.
- One of the Mom's said to me, discipleship is very simple to understand. Discipleship means giving God my whole heart and seeing everything I do as done for Jesus: whether it is folding laundry, going to work, buying shoes. Do it for Jesus; share the heart of Jesus.
- ***Baptize*** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
 - Baptism signifies relationship. The baptized is drawn into the very life of God, becomes a child of God.
 - I always think of my dear mother who said, "I love ALL children. I love my own a little bit more." (My mother later added that she loved her grandchildren more than her own children – but we won't talk about that.)
 - To be baptized is to be God's child, God's beloved.
 - To baptize then is to offer the love of the Father, the salvation of the Son and the companionship of the Spirit, to give people the strength to endure and the joy to share.
 - Baptism also makes us sisters and brothers in Christ, joined together by Holy Mother Church. Baptism joins us to the community of God's children.
 - (At the 5:00 p.m.) It's why we have with us this evening our children who are preparing for their First Holy Communion. They are preparing to enter more fully into communion with God and with us as community. It's why are promise to assist them.

- It's (also) why Alpha is so important. Alpha helps us to understand the relationship better: both my relationship with Jesus Christ and with my sisters and brothers. Alpha helps me to appreciate God's love given fully and freely and opens me to share that love with those I encounter
- Here it's clear, that the Church is not a fortress for the Saint only but a refuge for the sinner, a home, a place of support, love, guidance, forgiveness, acceptance.
- The command of Jesus to baptize is not merely for the priest or deacon and does not mean merely pouring the water. It is a call accompany the one baptized as a fellow pilgrim, as a sister or brother in the Lord.
- And lastly, Jesus tells us to TEACH and makes clear what the content is: ALL that I have commanded. So we start with the greatest commandment: love one another as I have loved you. It flows out then from there: the 10 commandments opening us to God and others, the beatitudes focusing us laser like on service of God and others.
- GO. MAKE. BAPTIZE. TEACH.
- With these words and this commission Jesus reminds us that our values are not dictated by this world.
 - In fact, as Bob Dylan reminds us, that the wheels of this world have to stop;
 - that in God's world everything is a more than a little upside down; that what the world thinks is good: power, fame, money, sex, control can often be VERY bad
 - and that what the world thinks is bad: humility, meekness, mildness, docility, putting the other first, is actually very GOOD.

- But we do none of this alone. Our Heavenly Father is watching out for us, always holding us gently, always close, always ready to help.
- Easier said than done, but we need to put worry aside and see how God provides and directs us, where God asks us to go. Just remember what God has done for the birds of the air or the grass of the field and we are worth so much more than they.

- *You'll find out when you reach the top, You're on the bottom.*
- Discipleship is about putting ourselves on the bottom and the other on the top, so that we might end up with the Lord.
- Again, in the immortal words of one of our newest Nobel Prize winners:

*Just surrender to God
and He'll move you right here where you stand,
and Ye shall be changed, ye shall be changed
In a twinkling of an eye,
when the last trumpet blows
The dead will arise and burst out of your clothes
And ye shall be changed.*

- Now, let's go make disciples.