

9th Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)
March 6, 2011

How well do we know God? Do we know Him like we know our best friends? In other words, can we talk with Him and spend time with Him like we do with our best friends? Do we know what He likes and dislikes? Do we know what His passions and crosses are in life? How well do we know God?

I have a friend who I've had since Kindergarten. We grew up in the same town just blocks away from each other. We had the same teachers in Elementary, Junior High and High School. We spent the summer months riding our bikes together, sleeping over at each other's house, and climbing trees together. We really knew each other very well.

I'm sure there are people in our lives who are our best friends and we know everything about them – their likes, dislikes, dreams, and so forth.

The question and the challenge though is: can we say the same about God? How well do we know God?

As we look at our Gospel reading for today, I think it's safe to say that some of us might be a little upset or taken back by Jesus' words to us. Let's listen to them again.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?’”

In other words, “Didn't we do what we were supposed to do...all in Your name?”

And how does Jesus respond?

“Depart from me, you evildoers. I never knew you.”

Wow! What exactly is Jesus saying here? Is he saying that preaching, healing, and doing great and mighty actions are not enough to get into heaven? Even if done in “the name of the Lord?”

Well, yes and no.

Doing good deeds is a good thing and we shouldn't automatically discount it here. Besides, they can't hurt our chances for getting into heaven.

However, if we are solely counting on our good deeds to get to heaven, then, no, they aren't good enough to get us there.

Before we get too discouraged though, let's take a look at 4 little words – 4 key words – that Jesus speaks to his disciples who think they are doing the will of God by their good deeds: “I never knew you.”

To do good deeds is one thing. But, to know Jesus and thus, to know God, is completely different.

Jesus is calling us to know Him and to know God first and foremost!

In other words, He's calling us to a deep, meaningful, and intimate relationship...one of unity and love.

He's calling us to spend time with Him, get to know Him – His likes, dislikes, passions, crosses – and to talk with Him and let Him talk with us.

He's calling us to be His best friend...but, at the same time, to be so much more than that...to be completely and wholly consumed by Him so that our thoughts are His thoughts...our words are His words...and our actions are His actions.

Once this is achieved – this deep, personal, and intimate relationship – then we will truly be able to “listen to His words and act on them” and be like wise men and women who “built upon rock.”

My friends, this is the surest way to heaven, to eternal life, to sanctifying grace – namely, by knowing God in a deep, meaningful, and intimate way. From this, everything else will follow – our thoughts, words, and actions. Our relationship must be first and foremost and everything else secondary.

So, we ask ourselves again, “How well do we know God?”

Maybe as we reflect on our Lenten practices for this year – fasting, praying, and alms-giving – we can take a look at this question and work on it a bit so that hopefully when Easter comes we can say to ourselves, “I know God a little better now than I did on Ash Wednesday...and thus, am better prepared to receive the kingdom of heaven.”