

# CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, January 23, 2022

## The Spin Cycle

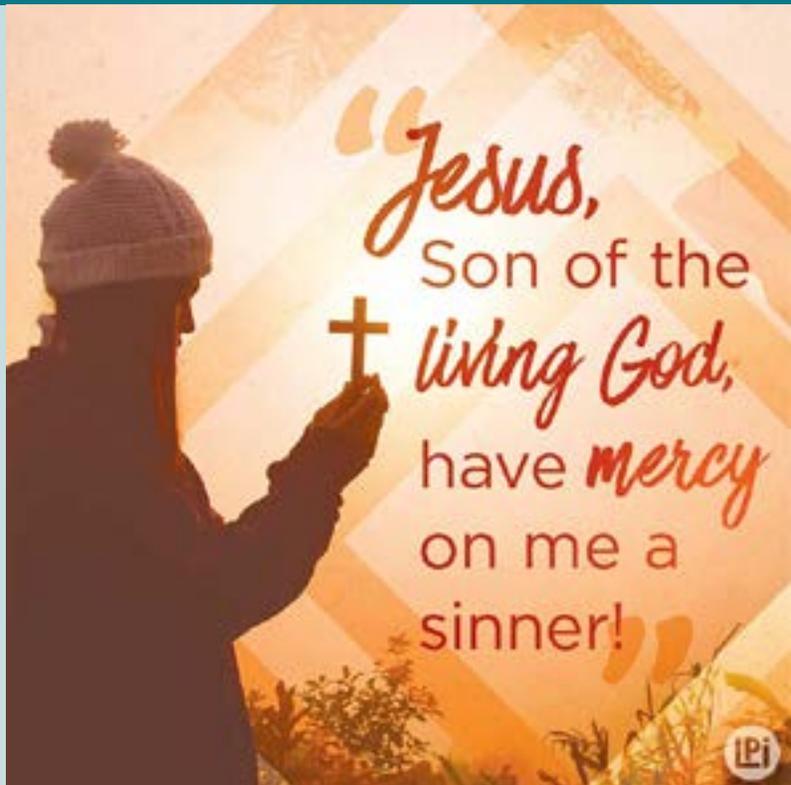
*Written by Fr. Mark Suslenko*

**Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10**

**1 Corinthians 12:12-30**

**Or 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27**

**Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21**



Jesus came into this world to show us God's kind, beautiful, suffering face. God, who cares deeply about the poor, the captives, the blind, and oppressed is truly a servant-God. God, majestic in His transcendence is also tender in His immanence. God is the God of the journey who never leaves His people. God simply waits. Generation after generation has wandered and fumbled to find their way. As we continue to stumble over the "gods" we create and often prefer, God simply reminds us that He is here.

What was the reaction when Jesus stood in front of those assembled in the synagogue when he said, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing?" Some may have thought he was presumptuous, arrogant, or even insane. Others who listened more with their hearts than their heads may have thought differently. They could have experienced the genuine, perfect, and unconditional love that resonated in his flesh and knew, without a doubt, that they were in the presence of someone wonderful and remarkable.

Jesus is the ultimate and perfect testament to God's love. His actions and words give witness to this truth. St. Augustine tells us what this love looks like, "It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men." Love finds its pinnacle in Jesus' complete and humble offering of himself on the cross. This is where Love's sacrifice and transformation meet. This wedding of death and life reveals the mystery of God's unconditional love and mercy. These are the signs for which human beings are constantly looking. Only God, through the gift of eternal life, can give life meaning.

God always finds us. He does not want us to stay lost. He sends messengers, servants, prophets, teachers, signs, promptings, and witnesses to get our attention so that His message can be delivered. Yet repeatedly, pride and arrogance convince us that we can do anything and everything without Him. Perhaps by setting pride and arrogance aside, we might recognize something deeper about ourselves and see just how lost we really are. We will see what binds us and our sinfulness. God wants to release us from all of that baggage! Not only that, but God wants to release us from what centuries of human baggage has caused: world organizational systems and accepted standards of operating that continue to keep people poor, oppressed, captive, and blind to truth. We need to be freed not only from what we are doing to ourselves but from what we are doing to others!

We do not have to look far to see the devastation. Anger, frustration, starvation, and violence are widespread in our nation and worldwide. Places once known to be safe are now places of anxiety and fear. Division, corruption, and exploitation exist within all institutions. People are confused over who they are and what true happiness means. Wars are waged, and more violence continues to be threatened. God's creation is hurting. It's looking more like what we created than what God has entrusted to our care. Human life as a sacred gift from God has become an increasingly unpopular truth. Corruption and exploitation exist at the highest levels and "sins of the flesh" run rampant. We fail to accurately calculate the devastating cost to humans across the world and throughout all generations.

Are we ready to let go of the control? Of the need to be right? Of the need to be ruggedly independent? We cannot live without God's Mercy, His unconditional, eternal, and ever-present love. We do not always get it right; the world does not get it right. The world is like a washing machine stuck on the spin cycle, relentlessly rotating, never quite getting where it needs to be. It forgets what it is supposed to do. It doesn't work. It is broken.

God, as Emmanuel, came into the brokenness of our world to help us fix it. The followers of Jesus, baptized in Christ and made in God's image and likeness, have yet to learn that to be a servant, one must share. Here's a true story: A woman visiting friends went to the local parish for early Sunday Mass. She proceeded to sit in a pew and in short order received a tap on her shoulder. "Excuse me, you are in my seat. Can you please move?" She got up and went to another pew. Beginning to pray and prepare for Mass, she receives another tap on the shoulder with the same request. "Excuse me, you are in my seat. Can you please move?" What is this, she thought to herself? She got up and moved again. Feeling a bit perturbed at this point, she was astonished when the exact same scenario happened a third time!

What happened to the woman in this story is a microcosm of exactly what is wrong with our world. These "people of God" who asked this woman to move believed they were doing nothing wrong. This stranger encroached on space believed to be rightfully theirs. After all, they are the regular, faithful contributors to this parish and are, thus, entitled to reserved seating, right?

## PRAYER

Dear Jesus,  
help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go.  
Flood our souls with your Spirit and Life.  
Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly  
that our lives may only be a radiance of yours.

Shine through us and be so in us that every soul  
we come in contact with may feel your presence in our souls.  
Let them look up and see no longer us but only Jesus!

Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as you shine,  
So to shine as to be a light to others.  
The light, O Jesus, will be all from you; none of it will be ours.  
It will be you, shining on through us.

Let us thus praise you in the way you love best, by shining on  
those around us.  
Let us preach you without preaching, not by words but by  
example,  
By the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what we do,  
The evident fullness of the love our hearts bear for you.

Amen.

*(Bl. Cardinal John Henry Newman)*

Wrong. Entitlement has become one of our most significant problems and sins. We have become entitled to entitlement! In God's kingdom, nobody is entitled to a seat, yet all are seated. Isn't that wonderful? Maybe that is what the first hearers of Jesus' proclamation in the synagogue understood: that everyone has a place. No one is without a seat and what we do in the small matters of our lives affects how the big ones play out. While we may not have directly exacerbated the plight of someone suffering in another part of the world, we can easily be responsible for making someone in our community feel unwelcome, unappreciated, and unloved. All actions and attitudes are connected to the whole, resulting in a ripple effect on life beyond our comprehension. Until we understand the meaning of love and grasp our reluctance at times to receive it, we will remain tethered and aimlessly spinning. We stay broken and lost. *Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner!*

Fr. Mark Suslenko