

4 Sunday A – Fr. Val Handwerker

January 29, 2017

Cathedral

5:00 and Noon

Theme: An upside-down view of real “movers and shakers”

“Whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord.”

Who are those who shape this nation and the world? In recent days we’ve seen the landscape change—leaders who became past tense, with others coming to the fore. They make major decisions. They establish economic policies which affect the lives of thousands. They broker peace, or wage war.

We call them “the movers and shakers.”

But not according to Jesus. We hear today the start of Jesus’ greatest sermon, and it’s worded such that he gave this sermon again and again, not just once. It’s Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, and he begins with his Beatitudes. Jesus spells it out, that those who will *really* change the world are the poor in spirit, those who grieve, the meek and merciful, those who hunger for justice, and those who are focused on integrity of life and heart. They may well face persecution in their witness. To Jesus in his greatest sermon, though, *they* are the real movers and shakers. (1)

Yes, friends, St. Paul spells it out that this is really *God’s* choice. Listen again as we heard the Apostle Paul in our second reading: **“God chose the foolish to shame the wise...the weak...to shame the strong...the lowly...to reduce to nothing those who are something”** (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). *These* try to live, by grace, according to the standards of the Gospel, and not according to an ego-gone-wild. In Jesus’ eyes, these are the true “movers and shakers” whose lives point to the hope of the kingdom of heaven. It turns the view of the world completely upside-down. And, you know, Jesus is looking precisely to us, *within our everyday lives and our normal routines*, to live by the standards of the Beatitudes. His grace, working through us, can really change the landscape of the world.

Back in the 13th century, when someone asked St. Francis of Assisi how he was able to accomplish so much in the world, he said, “I have thought about that myself and this may be why: the Lord looked down at the earth from heaven and said,

‘Where can I find the weakest, the littlest, the meanest man on the face of the earth?’ Then (the Lord) saw me and said, ‘Now I have found him, and I will work through him. He won’t be proud of it. He’ll see that I am only using him because of his littleness and his insignificance.’ (2)

Sisters and brothers: It’s Jesus’ greatest sermon, his famous Sermon on the Mount. And he starts with his Beatitudes to identify the real “movers and shakers” in God’s view: the poor in spirit, the meek and merciful; those who are saddened, those who hunger and struggle for justice, and those who are focused on integrity of life and heart—*these* are blessed!

His sermon turns everything upside-down! By his grace, we can be *his* “movers and shakers.” Right now...and not just in eternity.

(1) I am indebted to Dianne Bergant, C.S.A., for this expression and her insights in “Movers and Shakers,” America (Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time A, January 30, 2005) @deaconsil.com., under “Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time—2017.

(2) Quoted in The Word among us: The Spirit of Catholic Living—January 2017 (WAU, Frederick Maryland, 2016), pg. 19.