

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Is 6:1-8, 1 Cor 15:11, Lk 5:1-11 -

We place a great weight on success and failure in today's American culture. Succeed at any cost...failure is not an option!

And when we polarize success and failure this way...when we fail to consider that there is middle ground called learning

When we consider success and failure as mutually exclusive... we miss the point.

Even failure is a funny thing. It can be a devastating experience... And leave us discouraged and despondent

....or it can be motivating... A moment when we develop real insight... when we are better prepared for the next challenge

Winston Churchill once said:

Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.

Our readings today have a similar theme and promote the idea that failure, in God's eyes, is simply part of being human

Take the prophet Isaiah in today's first reading. God reveals Himself in all His glory to Isaiah in the temple.

Upon seeing God, Isaiah feels overwhelmed with a sense of his own sinfulness... One of the greatest of all Old Testament prophets feeling defeated... dejected and hopeless.

Yet when the angel touches a burning ember to his mouth, he recovers with "Here I am...send me!" and his prophecies of a Messiah became foundational to our faith,

Something quite similar happens in today's gospel when Simon Peter witnesses a miraculous catch of fish. And like Isaiah, Simon Peter becomes overwhelmed with a strong sense of his own sinfulness.

Now Simon Peter was a fisherman. It was his livelihood. He was used to the good days and not so good days of fishing. He wasn't a sport fisherman, he didn't go fishing to relax or fish to deal with job stress.

His life and the lives of his family depended upon his skills and his talents in catching fish.

But witnessing Christ's power through the magnificent catch of fish, Simon Peter concludes that he was not worthy to be in the same boat as Jesus... perhaps pride and arrogance been stripped away to reveal a different Simon Peter, one who was vulnerable and humbled.

There are a couple of common threads that we can pull on with these readings today

The first is the virtue of Humility and what it can do this to us...allowing us see ourselves as we really are....rather than who we imagine ourselves to be....

We often think that humility is about self-denial....self sacrifice... it is that virtue that keeps pride and envy out and keeps us in our place

But humility is really about greater self-appreciation...about seeing ourselves as clearly as God sees us ...warts and all!

Humility is also about taking honest self-inventory.... Taking true stock of ourselves...and revising our life plan... Making course corrections... and leaving failure behind.

The second common thread is faith. Without faith we could probably care less about how God sees us...God doesn't matter...success and failure are ends to themselves

Coupled with our faith, Humility is a spiritual a self examination that opens the door to change

In the cases of Isaiah...Simon Peter and even Paul, God enters their lives in powerful ways that allow each them a brief glimpse of their own own imperfections...that becomes for each ...a life changing event

Without faith and humility...failure can often provoke feelings of self- doubt ...leave us despondent

Without faith and humility, failure can create fertile ground for negative thinking ...even cultivating questions about whether God loves us.

Ghandi once said:

"My imperfections and failures are as much a blessing from God as my successes and my talents and I lay them both at His feet"

But with both of these virtues of faith and humility we can transform failure into success...

By placing faith and trust in God we can take both the success and failure in our lives in stride ...seeing each as simply part of a divine plan that encourages each one of us to muster the courage and echo Isaiah's words:

"Here I am Lord...send Me!"

God Bless