

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time - B - '2021
Numbers 11.25-29///James 5.1-6///Mark 9.38-45,47-48

→Rooting for the home team is, for many of us, especially at this time of year, the most natural, easy loyalty we have.

→most of us grew up attending high schools where the annual “big game” was between our beloved alma mater and “that other team” across town.

→Across this land college rivalries abound...think Alabama and Auburn, Oklahoma and Texas, UCLA and USC, Notre Dame and Boston College and of course, Ohio State and that team from up north...all annual big games...to millions of college football fans.

→home team loyalties are natural...and are often wonderful when it comes to athletic teams...but loyalty in other senses...or to another person...can sometimes be crippling...

→and that is the case in our gospel reading and in the other scripture readings we just heard today.

→we are told about the disciples...John in particular...no doubt hoping to garner loyalty points...by telling J. that some stranger is performing miracles in his name

...and since this person was unknown and unapproved by Christ, the disciples didn't like it and so they try to get Jesus to stop him

→but Jesus answers them by saying: *"...there is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who at the same time can speak ill of me....anyone who is not against us is with us...anyone who gives you a cup of water because you belong to Christ will not go without reward."*

→I can just picture J standing and looking around at the disciples and shaking his head

→because the disciples....in the name of loyalty....were concentrating more on **this stranger** performing miracles rather than what was happening in front of them....

→and the same scenario happens also in the first reading as well...we hear about a young man quickly coming up to Moses complaining about Eldad and Medad...that they were prophesying in the camp...and so he asks Moses to put a stop to these young "upstart" prophets

→....and Moses responds similar to Jesus...when he says: *“Are you jealous....would that all the people of the Lord were prophets...and the Lord bestow his spirit on them all!”*...

→i.o.w....Moses says...you would rather have me silence these prophets rather than listening to their words?

→and so, perhaps **that is** the message that comes to us today....

→to maybe concentrate a bit more on the presence and challenge of Christ in our lives and less on all the seemingly unimportant obstacles that can often clutter up our lives

→today as we see...the disciples and the young man of the first reading were the obstacles

→their loyalty to Christ really gets in the way of them realizing the true message of Jesus, preventing them from seeing Christ in others and consequently in themselves.

PAUSE

→[and]...it is very easy and common to create similar types of obstacles between us and God at times as well

→and so, Christ, uses some strong imagery about getting rid of these obstacles

→he says if your hand or your foot or your eye is your obstacle...then get rid of it!!!

→now in reality, Christ is not advocating self-mutilation or murder but what HE IS saying is that the ONLY thing in our lives that truly matters is our search for unity and closeness to God....and

anything that stops or blocks or hinders that search and keeps us from God...is an obstacle that needs to be gotten rid of.

→[and] think for just a moment....of the many obstacles in our daily lives that keep us from knowing God

→the most obvious, of course.....is "sin" but I also believe that Christ is urging us to become more aware of those not-so-obvious obstacles that often creep into our lives

→those....that perhaps we don't always recognize but nonetheless, if gotten out of hand can certainly keep us from fully embracing Christ in our lives.

→for instance...the obstacle of material possessions or worrying about whether we have enough or not

→our jobs can be an obstacle to knowing Christ when we become obsessed with recognition//or promotions

→our relationships...when they become nothing but competition between ourselves and others can become an obstacle to knowing Christ...

→even television and all of our electronic gadgets can be an obstacle if we allow them to take over our lives and take away from our conversation and being with family and friends.

→and so, I think the challenge and lesson before us is to be aware of the obstacles

→...and even more so...to be aware of our need to keep focus on Christ and his presence in our lives and world.

PAUSE

→the point of today's readings is to focus and sharpen our attention on Christ and his message

→to rid ourselves of the obstacles we create and concentrate on the presence of Christ in us and one another.

→in this season when we root our lungs out for the home team...we who follow Jesus are called to a dangerous degree of loyalty to him...

→today, once again...we are called to follow Jesus in our lives

→to concentrate and focus on what really matters, on what is truly important

→to concentrate and focus on Jesus Christ and his presence in our lives

→rather than all of those obstacles that seem to just get in the way.....