

Twenty Eighth Sunday Ordinary Time – C -2022
2 Kings 5.14-17//2 Tim. 2.8-13//Luke 17.11-19

→this weekend I am going to attempt something different...usually when I prepare my homily I focus on the message of the gospel reading...and sometimes I will make reference to the first reading from the O.T. because more often than not...the first reading and the gospel are connected in theme and ideas...

→rarely does the 2nd reading from the N.T. get any attention and that is because more often than not...it kind of stands alone...or the connection to the other readings isn't as clear...

→however today we get a unique perspective in the second reading...St. Paul is writing to Timothy from prison...as he is being held captive...

→I remember vividly the first time I visited a prison...it was a dreary day in winter...the building itself was a dreary, castle-like structure

→once inside, I waited with a group of visitors, mostly women and children....

→and I remember a surge of panic when I was herded into a room with the others to be frisked and searched

→I was equally startled when I heard the steel door slam shut behind us

→[and] it lasted for only a second...but it was a momentary flash of what all prisoners must experience on the day the doors close and their sentence begins...at that moment I felt an intense experience of separation and submission

→separation from the outside world...and submission to an unyielding authority

→it's not hard to imagine what such a visit is like

→there is a thick wall of bullet-proof glass...a concrete sterile cubicle surrounds you...your voice echoes and you are under the watchful gaze of an armed guard

→in a very real sense...you are separated from the world

→and every move, gesture, sound, and freedom that we take for granted is scrutinized and watched

→in a strange way when you visit someone in prison you are in a prison-like captivity as well

→however you don't have visit a prison to feel a sense of separation [from the outside world] and submission [to an unyielding authority]

→I felt that way just this week as I put my thoughts together while flying to and from New Orleans....

→being on an airplane separates you from the outside world...and makes you dependent on the talents and skills of the pilot

→and in a very real way there is a certain sense...of captivity even when flying...

→[you know]...often we find ourselves in situations and circumstances that make us feel like we are in captivity

→it happens when we stand at the bedside of an elderly family member dying a slow death...or when we watch a good friend or family member destroy their lives by drugs or alcohol---

→or perhaps, there has been some event in your own life, a situation or circumstance that has made you feel separated from life....separated from our normal routines....and instead held captive to our fear, apprehensions and anxieties

PAUSE

→today, St. Paul, writes to Timothy from captivity...a letter from prison

→yet from Paul's letter a light seems to stream forth from the bars of the prison window as he writes that "*Jesus Christ raised from the dead...is the message for which I suffer hardship...but there is no chaining the word of God*"

→what a profound and meaningful message for us today....

→ "there is no chaining the presence of Christ and the love of God in our lives, there is no chaining the light and the goodness in which we believe in."

→i.o.w.....there is no holding captive the **light** and the **word** and the **goodness** of Jesus Christ in our lives and world.

PAUSE

→what this means for us...is.....

---that through the captivity we sometimes feel as a loved one slips away from us to a better place.....

---or through the captivity we sometimes feel as someone we care about hits rock bottom only to survive and become better

---....or through the captivity we sometimes struggle with in our own lives with broken relationships, estrangement from those we love, or financial problems we face...

→that through all this

→...the light of Christ and the goodness of God shines forth...the mercy and righteousness of God continues to prevail...

→the love of God and the presence of Christ outlasts and is stronger than all the evil and bad things that happen in our world and lives.....

PAUSE

→no doubt there are times in life when our understanding...our reasoning...our spirits are going to be tested beyond our limits.....

→...doubt and darkness can fill our soul...suffering and pain sears our hearts...despair and sadness quenches our spirit.....

→and it is at times such as these, that the light of Christ, the hope of God and the goodness we all possess...must begin to emerge

→the light of Christ and the goodness in each one of us must take hold of our lives and spirit

PAUSE

→God's care for us...cannot and must not be chained...the Light of Christ must become strong and the Gospel message must live in our lives.....

→because that is who we are as believers in the message of Christ

→and because of that light...because of the Word....because of our God...we know that we are not made for prison...we are not made for captivity.....

→may we always carry that message with us....especially in our times of need as a reminder that Christ's love and peace...His light...will always set us free!