

13TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME C CYCLE 2022

1st Reading: 1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21 [Elisha left his family & followed Elijah]

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 16 "You are my inheritance, O Lord."

2nd Reading: Galatians 5>1, 13-18 [You were called for freedom, serve one another through love]

Gospel Acclamation: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening; you have the words of everlasting life."

Gospel: Luke 9:51-62 [Follow me & proclaim the kingdom of God.]

♪ Got my hands on the Gospel plow, wouldn't take nothing for my journey now.

Keep your hands on that plow, hold on. Hold on, hold on. Keep your hands on that plow, hold on. ♪

[Keep Your Hands on the Plow, Hold on, Spiritual Gospel African Lyrics Words sing along music song - Bing video](#)

In today's Gospel, we hear three memorable proverbs. "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." Then there is: "Let the dead bury their dead," and "Foxes have dens, and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head."

What did they mean in the time of Jesus? And what are they saying to us today?

The one about **the plow** - is a response to the person who wants to follow Jesus, but wants to say goodbye to his family first. Jesus is **not** saying "stop loving your family." He is saying "Just like you can't plow in a straight line if you keep looking back, neither can you follow me if you do not let go of your past and put the values of my reign above even the customs of your family, tribe or nation." Values like the one Paul quotes today, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

The proverb about **letting the dead bury their dead** sounds harsh, and it is meant to be! It is *hyperbole*, an exaggeration for dramatic effect that was common in Jesus' day. If we were to follow it literally, and neglect our parents, we would not be living the law of Christ.

Jesus is really saying, "You don't have to wait for your father to die, you can't wait until all your family affairs are in perfect order. Follow me now, you may not get the chance again." That's exactly what Elisha does in the first reading.

I remember when my father had a stroke & I went home to be with my mother & sisters. He had been in a coma for a week. I was tempted to stay longer, but my mother sent me back to my ministry as a Friar.

I was with a married couple preparing for a Marriage Encounter weekend when the call came that he had died. I had to follow the call of Christ even while waiting for my Dad to pass over to be with God.

The proverb about **the foxes and birds** is about following Jesus wherever he goes.

Following Jesus meant to let go of the ways even prophets like Elijah and Elisha sometimes acted. They did not hesitate to **kill** in the name of God. In fact, James and John were probably thinking of them when the Samaritans refused to welcome Jesus in today's Gospel. They wanted to "call down fire from heaven," to fight violence & rejection with rejection & violence. Jesus says clearly, to them and to us, "that is **not** the way my followers act."

What does all this say to us today?

First of all: Jesus calls **us** to let go of whatever holds us back from following him: whether it is family, work, old wounds, security, vengeance or nostalgia for the old days.

Second, he challenges us to accept the freedom that comes from following him, and to use it to serve, to forgive & to spread the light of the Gospel.

We will celebrate the gift of freedom in a week, on Monday the 4th of July. It's a value that is deeply rooted in the culture of the United States. But it was only a reality for **some** of the people who fought for freedom from the oppression of the British.

Independence Day was not a celebration for Black Americans in the mid 19th century. They celebrated freedom last Sunday & Monday with a new holiday called Juneteenth.



A mouse caught in my trap refusing to leave its prison & be free

It is a celebration of the day when the last group of black slaves found out that they had been emancipated. That event took place on June 19, 1865, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years after Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

St. Paul reflects on the meaning of freedom in the 2nd reading for this Sunday. He writes, "You were called for freedom, brothers and sisters. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love."

What does it mean to use our freedom as an opportunity for the flesh? That happens when I use my freedom without regard for how it affects my neighbor. We see it happening when anyone is free to buy an assault weapon to kill children, or members of another race or religion.

We see it when the so called "free market" makes profits so central that the environment is destroyed and the poor are made poorer even as billionaires thrive.

We see it when anyone uses the gift of freedom of speech to lie, bully and attack those of different races, religions or sexual orientation or even those with a different political allegiance.

Finally, Paul presents us with a new vision of how to follow God's way - how to live in freedom, how to choose life. It is a vision of **non-violent resistance**, of **forgiveness**, & of **service**.

This is the vision presented by St. Paul when he writes "serve one another through love." For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

[The rabbis of that time, and of ours, reflect that this command from the Book of Leviticus doesn't mean to love your neighbor as you love yourself, as important as that is. They understand it to mean to love your neighbor as if you were that person, as some might say, to walk in someone else's shoes. In the Book of Samuel, we read "Jonathan ... loved David as his very self." 1 Sam. 20:17]

The spiritual, *Oh Freedom*, expresses that vision well. [Kim Harris & M. Roger Holland II, in Welcome Table, A Mass of Spirituals, have taken one of the Eucharistic acclamations of the Mass & set it to the melody of Oh Freedom]

♪ Save us, savior, save us, savior, save us savior of the world.
O freedom, O Freedom, O freedom over me,
For by your cross and resurrection you have set, have set us, set us free. ♪
And be-fore I'd be a slave I'd be buried in my grave, and go home to my Lord and be free.

[Oh Freedom! - The Golden Gospel Singers \(Lyrics in Description\) - Bing video](#)

So does the song "Freedom" by Jon Baptiste.

[FREEDOM · Jon Batiste.mp4 - Bing video](#)



Creation praising God