

God is in control

The historian who wrote the 2nd book of Chronicles, from which our first reading for today comes, looked back at the Babylonian Captivity and saw the hand of God. The Jewish people had practiced infidelity after infidelity, abomination after abomination. The prophets had been persecuted and, even worse, ignored. Finally, God permitted a foreign people to conquer Judah, sack Jerusalem, destroy the Temple and put the majority of the people into slavery in Babylon. This was in 588 B.C. After about 60 years, though, the Babylonians themselves were conquered by the Persians. According to the Chronicler, Cyrus, King of Persia, saw his conquests as gifts from God. He therefore released the Jewish people so they could return to their land to rebuild the Temple to God in Jerusalem.

Throughout this whole account there is no doubt in the chronicler's mind but that God is in control of the world and of his people. This same thought is reflected in the 2nd reading for today from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. "God has made us his handiwork," St. Paul says. He has given us a place in the heavens. He has created us in Christ "to lead the life of good deeds which he has prepared for us in advance." Nothing is outside of God's grasp and power. He who is in control of the universe has called us to join him in his recreation of the world in Christ Jesus.

Keeping this all in mind we can understand the significance of the gospel proclamation. God has sent his Son who will be raised up so that those who look upon him with faith may have eternal life. The sign of their faith is that they will do their deeds in the light.

The cross is the sign of contradiction. Christ, put to death, is in control of the universe. What appears as defeat is really victory because the sacrifice of Christ initiates the reign of God. At his weakest, Jesus is the strongest. God is in control. He turns defeat into victory for those with a living faith in him.

This is important for us to recognize in our own struggles in life. When in our weakness, we are united to Christ's cross, we are at our strongest. When we are convinced that we can't handle things by ourselves, but need God's help, we are at our strongest because we now recognize our need for him in our lives. When we put all in his hands and act according to our consciences, even though this may be difficult and painful, then in our weakness we are strong.

God is in control. We have to tell ourselves that over and over. If only we would allow him to be our strength, then nothing can defeat us. Not even the worse cross we could imagine can destroy his love in our lives.

Today we pray that we might trust in God to be strength in our weakness.