Nothing Is More Important Than Relationships

In today’s First Reading and Gospel the Lord raises two people from the dead. In both cases, immediately after they are brought back to life, we are told that Elijah and Jesus gave them to their mothers (1 Kings 17:23 and Luke 7:15). Here’s the key point to notice: the Lord wasn’t interested only in restoring them to physical life, but in restoring them to relationship. The Lord didn’t want the mothers (both widows without anyone else to care for them) to be deprived of the relationship with their sons. So he brings them back to life in order to bring them back into relationship. We often read these passages focusing simply on the physical miracle of the dead being raised. But the Lord has something more important in mind: the restoring of relationships.

Sunday

Did you know that for the Lord, nothing is more important than relationships? When Jesus spoke about relationships, he couldn’t have been any clearer. He taught us that relationships must be given the highest priority.

“One of the scribes asked Jesus, “Which is the first of all the commandments?” Jesus replied, “The first is this: ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Mark 12:28-31

So Jesus clearly teaches that a loving relationship with God and neighbor is the most important thing. Spend some time praying over this passage and this simple but powerful truth: For the Lord, nothing is more important than relationships.

Monday

Jesus is very clear that we are to place the highest value on relationships. So this means that we need to prioritize, making sure that relationships come first. How do I know what my real priorities are? Before the Lord, ask yourself these questions:

- What does my schedule tell me about my priorities? What gets my time?
- When I’m getting ready in the morning, what do I always make sure I have time to do? (Coffee? Facebook? News? Relationship time with family?)
- When I look at my checkbook, what gets paid no matter what?
- What do I find myself talking about the most?
- In the midst of stress and worry, what brings me the most comfort?

Don’t be afraid to let the Lord show you what’s really going on. We can only change if we first admit that something needs to change.

Tuesday

The questions from Monday probably showed you some lesser value things that get more priority in your life than relationships. “Here’s the strange thing: the lesser value almost always overwhelms the greater. Lesser values take less faith and less effort. The lesser value seems easier, and so it will constantly draw you in. Because to all appearances you can reach the lesser value more quickly, you’ll be continually tempted to make it your first priority.”

Ok, that means it’s going to take some effort to re-prioritize things. Spend some time today asking the Lord for that strength, remembering, in faith, this verse: “I can do all things in him who strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:13

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Wednesday
One of the lesser values that often gets greater priority in life is money. Jesus knew this, so he taught us very clearly: “You cannot serve both God and money.” (Matthew 6:24) Relationships are more important than money. But because of what we learned yesterday (the lesser value almost always overwhelms the greater), those who try to love both God and money end up loving just money. It’s not that money is bad in itself – the Lord knows we need food, clothing, shelter, etc. But very often we trust our wealth more than our heavenly Father. That’s where get into trouble. So spend a few minutes praying through Matthew 6:24-33 where Jesus teaches us that our heavenly Father knows that we need material things but wants us to trust him to provide them, trust him more than we trust in our wealth itself. In the end, we cannot love both God and money.

Thursday
Another lesser value that often gets greater priority than our relationships is the accomplishing of tasks. We live in a world that prizes efficiency and getting things done. In fact, the world often measures our value by how much we can do. (That's why the world seems to have less time and love for the elderly, the sick and those who have any sort of disability. “If you aren't productive”, the world says, “then you aren’t worth it…” But the truth is that relationships are more important than accomplishing tasks. It's not that we don't need to get things done, but over the course of a typical week or month in my life, how often do I push off relationships as I say, “I'll have time for them once I finish with this project...”?
Today, pray through the passage about Zacchaeus and Jesus in Luke 19:1-10. Notice in the first verse that we are told “Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town.” But Jesus changed his plans in order to change Zacchaeus' life. Jesus put aside whatever destination he had in mind and spent the day with Zacchaeus, telling him “Today I must stay at your house”. As you pray through the passage, ask the Lord to give you grace to change your plans so that relationships get more priority than accomplishing tasks.

Friday
When we die, we lose everything except our relationship with God and others: our career, our savings, our possessions. It is all lost. Death reminds us that only our relationships will last. Jesus powerfully taught us this in a parable about a rich man who stored up all kinds of earthly treasures (Luke 12:16-21). After satisfying himself that he had more than enough earthly things to enjoy a comfortable life, the Lord told him: ‘You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?’
Scripture is clear that all of us will die and stand before God. Spend a few minutes praying over this verse today:
“For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written:
‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bend before me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God.’
So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God.” (Romans 14:10-12)

Saturday
Go back to Monday and spend some time looking at your priorities again. In light of the last few days, what needs to change? Whatever it might be, be encouraged, because with the Lord all things are possible. Let the words of this verse soak into your heart as you let the Lord in to accomplish that change within you:
"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)