**32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time – Cycle B**

1 Kings 17: 10-16; Heb 9: 24-28; Mk 12: 38-44

November 10/11, 2012

When I was in high school, there was a guy by the name of Bill. His dad drank too much. His mom struggled to pay the bills and keep the kids in line. Bill and his numerous siblings struggled to fit in with the rest of the school because they didn’t have fancy clothes or trendy hairstyles, or money to go out and have a lot of fun. They kept to themselves in a lot of ways because there weren’t many of us who wanted to spend a lot of time with them. Quite frankly, we didn’t want to be associated with them.

They were from the “other side of the tracks”, as the old saying goes.

In every city there are walls that divide and separate the rich from the poor, the influential from the unimportant. When I was in California this past year I was amazed that there were so many “gated communities” that separated those with money and prestige from those without influence and social standing and thus deemed dangerous.

In every larger city there are “neighborhoods;” neighborhoods for those who have public praise and neighborhoods for the common folk. These neighborhoods are demarcated by certain streets. If you are on one side of the street you are in one neighborhood, and if you are on the other side you are in another. Of course in some cities there is the reality of ghettos and slums.

The rich and influential of the world don’t like setting foot into the ghettos, into the slums, into the neighborhoods, into what our Latino brothers call the *barrio.*

Yes, to cross from one side to the other is not easy. To cross over from a position of power or influence to a position of powerlessness and insignificance is frightening. It leaves you worrying: “What if I can’t go back? What if someone robs me of my possessions?” If you make this type of crossing you have to give up security and power.

Yet, to go the other direction is not easy either. To go from the side of powerlessness and insignificance to the side of privilege, power, and wealth can be dangerous. That is why so many people stay where they are at. That is why they often refuse to cross over to the other side of town. It can be dangerous to do so because those who have power and influence don’t want them around, don’t want to be upset by the presence of those who lack social or political influence. They would rather suppress and silence them.

Think of the life of Jesus and his own experience on Palm Sunday. He rode a donkey toward Jerusalem. As long as he was outside the walls of the city, as long as he stayed on the outside of the walls with those who counted for little, who were poor and powerless, he was welcomed and acclaimed Messiah and King. As soon as he entered through the city walls, as soon as he entered the place where those with religious and political power lived, he was derided and killed. His own apostles tried to keep him from going in, from crossing over, because they knew it was dangerous. They knew he might be killed.

In today’s Gospel we hear of the widow’s mite. We hear of a powerless woman with no social, political or religious influence giving her last coin to God, giving everything away, giving away her last bit of power and influence in an act of complete generosity and humility, *taxed to death* you could say. In our first reading, we hear of the widow woman from Zarephath who, when asked by a stranger, spent what was her last bit of oil and flour to feed her guest. It was an act of complete faith and charity.

Neither of these women were inside the walls of the privileged few, of those with fancy robes and places of honor, of those who recited lengthy prayers for all to hear. No, they were women of the ghetto, women of the barrio. They were from the wrong side of the railroad tracks.

Some of the most generous people I have ever met have been those on the other side of the tracks, those who live outside the walls of power and influence in society and Church. Often, generosity and humility reside outside those walls that protect those with privilege and power.

Jesus tells us: “Be on guard against those respected in public places, those who sit in places of honor, those who recite long prayers for others to notice, *and those who devour the savings of widows.* Jesus identified with the poor and the powerless. He identified with those for whom few cared to listen or respect. Jesus died when he crossed over and went into the halls of power and prestige, the halls of laws and prejudice. He died so that we might cross safely from this world to the next. He had to go before us. He died so we might be safe and live and come into God’s Kingdom.

We cannot really comprehend what he has done for us in this regard.

My friends, look for Jesus and follow him! Look for him, not in the places where honors are given or prestige is enjoyed. Look for him in the widows of the world, in the mentally ill, in the unemployed, in the alcoholic man or woman, in the elderly, in the unborn. Yes, look for him among those whose voices are muffled and silenced, for it is with them that the Lord finds a home and a place of welcome.

Look for him and follow him! You will find him on the wrong side of the tracks.