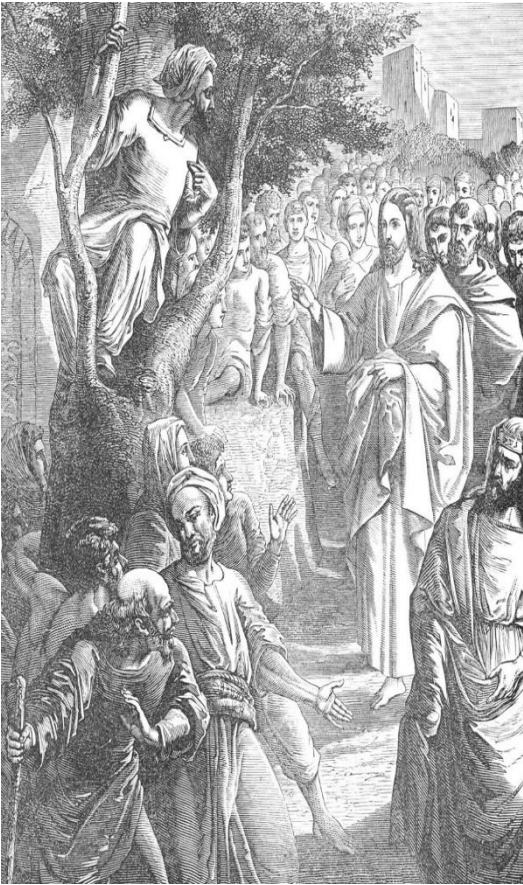


Gospel Reflection



The first part of today's gospel deals with the disciples' jealousy at someone else 'cashing in' on Jesus' name and authority. It is a continuation of their limited understanding about the message and ministry of Jesus. They still cling to an idea that Jesus is going to rise up in power against the forces of Rome and, in the aftermath, they are going to be sitting pretty as associates of this powerful figure. The disciples have been blinded by their dreams of glory and forgotten that the real story is that people are being cured and having demons cast out. Rather than celebrating the healing that is occurring in Jesus' name, the disciples are jealous that it's someone else who is getting the credit. Jesus assures them, and us, that any good work being undertaken genuinely in his name is to be welcomed. It is a reminder to us that sometimes we look down on the work of others because 'they're not one of us', or 'they're not doing it our way'.

The second portion of the gospel is one of the really challenging teachings of Jesus. Drawing on the image of the community as being a whole body, the teaching suggests that it is better to remove the part of the body/community that is causing sinfulness than have the whole body/community perish. It is a concept we are familiar with in modern medicine: sometimes it is necessary to remove diseased tissue to prevent the spread of disease. We are reminded that if we surround ourselves with negative people and negative influences, we too will become negative. If we separate ourselves from negative influences and surround ourselves with positive ones then the positive aspects of our lives will flourish.

Questions for Adolescents

- Q. Why might the disciples have been upset to see someone healing in the name of Jesus?
- Q. Why is Jesus not concerned by this person's actions?
- Q. What is the message of Jesus' teaching about cutting off what causes one to sin?
- Q. Are there circumstances in which you are a negative influence in someone's life?
- Q. How could you be a more positive presence in the lives of others?

Learning moments

Use a meditation or relaxation technique to reflect on aspects of your life that are not positive or life-giving. What actions can you take to bring about positive change - even if it means ending some negative relationships.

Create a silhouette of a person as a representation of the whole group. Colour the silhouette with vibrant, lively colours. In a reflective manner, identify ways in which the 'life' and 'colour' of the whole group is diminished by different actions and attitudes. For each negative action or attitude that is identified, cover a portion of the silhouette with black or white slips of paper. After all negatives have been identified, use colourful slips of paper (post-it notes) to identify life-giving actions within the group and restore new life and colour to the symbolic silhouette.