

The great American philosopher, Yogi Berra once said “It’s déjà vu all over again”

Jesus’ instructions to the Twelve Apostles are like those of God to the twelve tribes of Israel on the first Passover, eve of their exodus from Egypt. The Israelites likewise were sent out with no bread and only one set of clothes, wearing sandals and carrying a staff.

Both the Israelites and the apostles are to rely solely on the goodness of God and His grace. Can we rely on God for our needs?

Let me ask you this; when was the last time you were lavished by someone? When has anyone given you all that they have and all that you ever wanted, without reserve or regret or expectation? That’s what it is to be lavished.

Today Paul says that God *lavishes* gifts upon us as only God can.

- Blessedness
- adoption
- forgiveness of sin
- grace
- wisdom
- and the Holy Spirit, which Paul calls the “first installment” of our inheritance toward redemption.

Elsewhere in the Gospels, Jesus reminds us that the birds neither sow nor reap, yet they are fed by God.

The fields neither spin nor weave, yet they are arrayed in beauty. You and I are infinitely more valuable to God than these. Should we expect less?

No –

And yet, many people are hungry to the point of starvation and death. Many lack adequate shelter and clothing.

All those gifts that Paul lists are gifts to the believer, more specifically to the Believer in Jesus Christ.

So is the answer to these problems, hunger, despair, death, as simple as belief in God and in His Son?

I wish it were, but millions of Christians are deeply poor and we all have known loss or misery or sickness in some form or another.

Because they are His to give, God may choose to lavish His gifts upon anyone He pleases. We all know or have seen examples of people who seem to have it all, yet have no interest, no belief in God. Certainly there are people with no scruples, but God allows His rain to fall on the heads of both the good and the evil.

So why bother?

Is living the moral and ethical life really *worth* living?

I think we can agree that it is, whether for the highest reason, which Paul gives as the Glory of God, or the lower reasons such as I don't want people to treat me badly, so I will be moral and ethical to them because it can only benefit me.

Is motive enough? Not in all things, to be sure. But motive for love and glory of God certainly has, throughout the ages, **only** given us the true and the beautiful and the valuable.

That is a pretty bold statement considering some of the abuses of trust perpetrated by clergy of all denominations, wars of religion and atrocities done in the so-called 'name of God'. But one needs to ask in fairness, were any of those done with the highest motive? The answer would always be "no".

But when Christian action is guided by the highest good, for the Glory of God, and for the highest love, that is, truly willing the very best for the beloved, it is then that we see

- the formation of the first universities
- the first hospitals
- Christian missions to others that not only bring the faith, but
 - food,
 - Clothes and shelter and education
 - Clean water

- Human rights
- Healing of the sick and
- Care for the dying

Jesus sends out His Apostles. He gave them power and authority, not as mankind sees these things but rather He sent them in His power and authority. He also expected them to be dependent on the Goodness of God.

And amazing things were done.

And those same amazing things are still done today – by His apostles.

Certainly they are done by those who have an Apostolic Succession, that is, the Pope and all the Bishops of the world in communion with him, but also by us, you and me, His Church... for the word *apostle* means “sent”.

And this can bring with it more than its share of disappointments.

The prophet Amos experienced rejection and perhaps greater hardships than that. Paul was beaten, jailed and martyred. Stephen was stoned to death.

Jesus fully expected that the Twelve would meet with the same types of hardships.

In sending them two by two, He sent them as encouragers, as a servant to one another.

Jesus sent out the Twelve, two by two; not because two heads are better than one, but because two hearts are better than one.

And that is exactly how He sends us. Two by two,

- Husband and wife
- Son and daughter
- Brother and sister
- Friend and companion
- You and I
- We are both believers AND a community of believers

- (In a short while, Gretchen will become our newest family member, and by our witness to this Sacrament, we welcome her and promise to walk beside her for her life in Christ)

It really is “Déjà vu all over again” for all that the first Apostles accomplished in His name and by His providence, we are meant to do as well and more.

Let us, then, give thanks to God for the spiritual blessings He has bestowed upon us. Let us resolve to further Christ’s mission - to help others hear the call to repentance and welcome Christ into their lives by words and our constant witness.