

“Get behind me Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.” At first glance, these incredibly strong words of Jesus seem quite puzzling. After all, shouldn’t we think like human beings? How is it possible for mere human beings to think like God? We have all been invited to emulate the life of Jesus, and we are him, to “put on Christ” in our lives, to drink from his wellspring, to take in his truth and grace.

In today’s 2nd reading, Saint James reminds us that it matters little what we say if our actions do not reflect the reality. When we claim to be people of faith, yet do not even lift a finger to help others, we are not thinking like God. Saint James is focusing on our attitudes. Doctrine, vitally important as it is, is no substitute for action. Both are needed!

There are **two events** taking place in the Gospel worthy of note today. First, Jesus orders Peter and the apostles not to tell anyone that he was the Christ. This comes on the heels of the fact that Peter is the first recorded human being to openly acknowledge in the Scriptures that Jesus is the expected deliverer, the Messiah. Jesus does not dispute this point! Yet there remains a call to silence, because Jesus wanted to dampen any misguided political messianic enthusiasm.

Secondly, Christ follows this with a prediction of his suffering and Passion, the necessity of which Peter began to question– in fact, he argued with Jesus. Peter’s misunderstanding leads to the central feature of this Gospel passage, one equally puzzling to many.

The rebuke of Peter by Jesus is one of the most chilling passages in all the New Testament. Being rebuked is bad enough, but **to be likened to Satan– the adversary– must have been especially disheartening to him.** It is no different today We would welcome someone coming into our lives to fix the problems in the world. Some expect the government to do so.

They place their hope in it. While we desire confidence in our government, it can never fulfill the role of a Messiah. Jesus was not to reign on earth as a glorious, triumphant king, but rather as a Suffering Servant, as was foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

Thus, without realizing it, Peter was opposing God's plan by wishing to prevent Christ's suffering. He could not see beyond the human lens; he bristled at human suffering (don't we all); he was too focused on fixing everything from an earthly perspective. Jesus was **more** than the Messiah; he was the Son of God, who would freely accept the humiliation and shameful death upon the Cross for their sakes and ours as well.

Are we able to accept that the path to heaven includes both moments of tremendous joy and consolation as well as times of great pain and suffering? This weekend, we recall tremendous suffering, a day of infamy in our nation. But it was also a day during which so many stepped up in truly heroic ways to help others, showing forth the untiring spirit and character of so many in our nation.

Archbishop Gomez of Los Angeles, President of the USCCB said:

It was a dark day of destruction and death, but we remember also the heroes – first-responders, firefighters, police, emergency medical and rescue teams. Many gave their lives in the service of their neighbors. This violence, borne of the worst evil in the human heart, also brought out the best in our humanity. We honor the dead by the way we live. And today we pray for a new spirit of national pride and unity. May God inspire in all of us to seek fellowship, reconciliation, and common purpose.

The Cross, the ultimate sign of defeat, became the very instrument by which our Savior redeemed mankind. Because St. Peter could only see pain and desired to stop it from happening, he unwittingly was frustrating God's plan. In truth, we can neither stop suffering, nor cover it over and pretend it does not exist. But evil never, ever has the last word.

It surely did not on 9/11. On that very day, surmising that yet another American symbol was the likely target of their own flight, brave passengers charged the cockpit of Flight 93, to prevent the plane from striking yet another target. The first counter response to terrorism was bravely and patriotism; we must never forget the passengers and crew who died near Shanksville, PA.

The evil perpetrated upon this nation two decades ago is nothing compared to the goodness, resilience, compassion and strength of our nation. We call this Patriot Day for a good reason.

Isaiah assures us that the Lord God opens our ears to hear. We are called by faith to come with open ears to listen to His word, and open hearts receive that word with joy and trust, and then to act accordingly.

Let us pray for the grace to embrace his plan for us, most especially when we struggle mightily to understand and accept that plan, especially when it involves pain and suffering. Let us think with the mind of Christ and trust that all will be well.

“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it.”

When we hold each other in prayer, we ourselves become more Christ like. Together we will put on the mind of Christ and journey to the Father.