

SUNDAY 21 YEAR C.

Did you watch compass on channel 2 last weekend.
An interview in America with the American actor Martin Sheen, on the meaning of life.

The bulk of the interview centered on Martin's Catholic faith, a strong Irish based faith.

At one point the interviewer asked him about life after death, and on the question about heaven and hell Martin's response was that in his view, we choose Heaven or we choose the alternative.

Today in the Gospel we are asked a similar question. Are we prepared to be saved and are we prepared to make the right choices.

Well are we? That's the question.

A few words about our 1st reading.

Today Isaiah prophesy is answering a similar question about salvation which would come into reality some 200 years later, when after 50 years in exile the Jews returned to Jerusalem. Some of them bringing with them their pagan wives and in-laws who had been converted to the Jewish Faith. The question being would Yahweh accept these former pagans along with His chosen people. The question is answered in this reading. Yahweh foresaw that even non-Jews would be included in salvation.

In the 2nd reading Paul explores with his readers the consequences of the choices made. He explains that choosing the narrow gate of Jesus involves the necessity of accepting pain and suffering because God is treating you as one of His sons and daughters.

Who will be saved? The question put to Jesus in today's gospel. A question Jesus answered, as he often did, in a roundabout way.

We heard, recently, Jesus say it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. He was referring to the small gate that features in our gospel today.

In Jesus time most cities were surrounded by a strong wall, entry was via large gates guarded during the day but closed at night to guard against an attack by an invader.

There were smaller gates to allow access at all times, but these were so narrow that only one person at a time could pass through, under the watch of guards.

Jesus example here is that we should not assume that because of our Christian beliefs we will have easy access to Heaven. It's only by living lives of true commitment to his commandment of love, a commandment that demands that our lives are based around caring for others, that we will have any hope of salvation.

Jesus other example of the master locking the door is a reminder that we cannot leave the important aspect of our salvation until the last minute, it may be too late, the door may be locked!!

As Martin Sheen observed salvation is a matter of choice, if we chose Heaven then we have to work at it, we have to make all the right choices involving how we lead our lives. Are our lives totally committed to this, are they based on Jesus commandment of love, love of God, love of our neighbor, love of ourselves? If they are we will lead prayerful lives, caring lives, compassionate lives, forgiving lives, generous lives, merciful lives. Lives that put God first ahead of personal ambition for possessions and wealth. Jesus tells us to build up wealth in Heaven not on earth where it can be corrupted.

Perhaps now is a good time to look at our lives, in the light of today's readings.

What have we chosen?