

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time - 2008 A

1. Many people have heard of C. S. Lewis.
 - a. For some he's a science - fiction author,.
 - b. For others he's a children's author,.
 - c. However, first and foremost, C.S. Lewis was a religious author,
 - i. writing books like *Mere Christianity*, which explained the Christian faith for generations of believers in a clear and organized way.
2. Clarity and organization in his writing were also the way Lewis lived his life.
 - a. This was brought out very clearly in the movie *Shadowlands* starring Anthony Hopkins.
 - b. Early on we see Lewis, confidently preaching and teaching,
 - i. there were no shadows in Lewis' land yet.
 - c. But then one a day Joy Gresham, comes into his life.
 - d. her life is not so clear and organized. She is a divorcée, has a young son, an American.
 - e. Lewis does with her what he does with everything in his life.
 - i. He judges her, and analyzes her,
 - ii. He organizes her, and we see that
 - (1) He does that to control her.
 - (2) And to protect his organized little world.
3. None of this should be very surprising to us.
 - a. For some of us, organization is a hobby.
 - b. For others a passion,
 - c. and for many of us it is a religion, whose sacred scripture is the Franklin planner, and whose creed reads "There is but one God and Martha is her prophet."
 - d. we might not be as aware of it, but our reason for organizing things is the same as Lewis'; we want to be in control.
4. So did St. Matthew.
 - a. For in his Gospel he tells the story of a farmer sowing his seeds; some land on the path, others among the rocks, some in thorns and some in rich earth and yield incredible harvests.
 - b. **For the farmers listening to it,**
 - c. That sower was an idiot, for being so wasteful.
 - d. **But For Matthew** That sower was the church
 - i. Who shared the church's message in the world; knowing only a little would ever yield a harvest.
 - ii. **However, for Jesus who first proclaimed it** that sower was no farmer, that sower was God, who shared the gracious miracle of God's own life with everyone
 - iii. And not just the ones we or anyone else judged worthy of receiving it.
 - iv. Of course most of it would be wasted,

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- v. But then that was just the point;
 - vi. God was the sower and God would take far better care of things than we.
5. For those farmers, For Matthew and his Church Jesus became the great symbol of God's generous love for everyone, Jew and gentile, male and female, slave and free.
- a. And that gift changes people; it has to; for it challenges their control of their world and opens them up to the experience of God.
6. For Lewis this experience comes through Joy Gresham
- a. for slowly but surely, he begins to respond.
 - (a) he offers her a cup of tea
 - (b) a meal and then marriage
 - b. And if that were the end of the story, it would be fine,
 - (1) but Joy contracts terminal cancer.
 - c. For any of us, such a diagnosis would be shattering;
 - i. We would be tempted to walk away in order to maintain some illusion of control.
 - d. But Lewis doesn't; even though his wonderful world was sinking into shadows; it was precisely when he had lost all control that he discovers in himself . . . a gracious generosity; which allows him to care for Joy and love her as her life slowly slipped away.
 - e. After Joy's death, Lewis can no longer speak of life and God in the same confident clear and organized way;
 - f. And yet in the midst of his shadows it is clear that he has glimpsed something; or at least we glimpse it;
 - g. the power of God to pull from those shadows heroic love, generous service and make them a sacrament of God's life for others.
 - h. A sacrament which proclaims to all that we are not in control but God is. Thank God.