

AUGUST 20, 2025, FATHER PETER TURRONE

My brothers and sisters, when we read salvation history beginning with through the Old Testament, what we find is that the Lord calls his people. He chooses this small, insignificant group of people and he calls them, and he wants to save them from the Egyptians, from their slavery to them. And he wants to bring them to the promised land and give them this freedom. So they've been able to see these remarkable events right before their own eyes, and then they go along.

But we find that very quickly things start to go badly. Why? Because they become distracted, they lose their faith in God, and they become impatient. So all of that leads them to want things to go their own way. So they look at the cultures around them, they see how everybody else is living, and they say, "We want to be the same. We want to have our own King. We want to decide. We don't want God to be our King." So they're scheming. There's all sorts of plotting, all different things.

And every time that they decide to have their own King of their own choosing, rather than have God—or have God indicate to them who could be a good leader—they have so many problems. And we can hear about that just in the first reading from the book of Judges. We hear that there is a King who was plotting and he does things in the worst possible way. So rather than having God who loves them, who has their best interests at heart, who's their creator, they choose a man who's a murderer. They choose a man who has desire only for power and not to use the authority for the good of the people that he is supposed to be serving. Of course, he wasn't called to serve them, but he put himself in that position.

And then you can see this over and over again when we read the Scriptures. It's a terrible thing to see that, but it can happen to us, and it happens throughout history and for everyone, where when we decide for ourselves we say, "I don't want God to be my Lord. Maybe I want Him

to be my Savior at the end of my life and I want to go to heaven and I want everything to be this way, but on earth, I want to decide for myself." But when we have this attitude, when we—if we've ever tried living that way—we realise that it doesn't work at all.

In fact, the best way to live one's life is by having the Lord at the centre. And why is that? Because the Lord is so good, He's so generous, and He's so kind. And we hear about that in today's Gospel. In today's Gospel, the Lord is explaining to his disciples what the kingdom of heaven is like. And he says, "Look, the kingdom of heaven has this landowner, of course, it's the Lord himself, and he begins to hire people." So the Lord is going and he's looking for people to work. So he's looking for people to work. The Lord needs people to work for his kingdom. Jesus doesn't want us to just be sitting around doing nothing.

In order to enter into the kingdom of God, we first have to believe. Absolutely. That's the first thing to do, right? To believe in the Lord. And then we have to get up and we have to ask the Lord for the grace to discern how he wants us to serve him in the Church. And we have particular vocations. There's a universal vocation to holiness, and how we exercise that is going to be different. It's different for me than it is perhaps for you at home and for those here as well in this chapel. But all of us have this common mission. So we have to work for the kingdom of God. So there's no hand-outs here and everyone again enters through this response to the invitation.

So the Lord invites everyone, and now do I accept this invitation? First thing now—and then the Lord again, regardless of the time that we arrive, he loves and he invites us. So some people, when we see this, we can say, "Okay, what does that mean? Well, perhaps I've been a Catholic my whole life, right? So I was born into a Catholic family, I was baptised, I'm a disciple, and I've lived for the Lord. That is a great thing. It's a huge blessing if we've had that experience." For other people, it's not that way. Perhaps we grew up in a different family, a different

environment, or we grew up in a good family, but we turned away from the Lord. But at a certain point of our lives, we have a reversion. We realise, “Okay, wait a minute, the world and what it has to offer is not very much, and I’ve come to realise the love of Christ.” Okay, so now I’m gonna start to take my faith seriously. That means that I’m now entering into the kingdom of God. I start to pray, I start to read, I start to ask advice from a spiritual director, “How can I serve God? What can I do in this life?” You know, with the time I have. That’s a beautiful thing.

And when I talk to some people that have had that experience, they say, “You know, I regret not having practised my faith sooner.” And so there’s this kind of a bit of a sorrow that they have. But it’s like, it’s okay. You know, the fact is that you’ve arrived. Even if you arrived at five o’clock, you arrived. And that’s what matters. So we surrender the past to the mercy of God. A good confession, a sincere confession, repentance can handle that. And then we trust in the mercy of God. And then with the time that we have now, we dedicate ourselves to the Lord.

And Jesus tells us, he says, “Him and the Father are incredibly generous.” And from one point of view, you can say, “Well, it just seems kind of unfair. I mean, if I’ve worked eight hours and then somebody just shows up after one hour and they get the same pay, it does seem unfair.” But the Lord is saying, “Look, do not resent my generosity. Don’t resent this because I promised you that I would give you this. You’ve accepted it.” So where does this resentment come from? Maybe it comes from the fact that we present the Lord ruling over us—like I said in the beginning—like, everybody wants a savior, but not everybody wants a Lord. But we know, as scripture says, the Lord doesn’t kind of hang over us and he’s not putting all of this pressure on us. But the Lord, he looks at us like a loving shepherd, and his kindness. And in his mercy, he’s always encouraging us to do what is good, unlike the bad shepherds.

Today we celebrate the memorial of St Bernard. St Bernard was a man who understood what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. So imagine he experienced the love of God so profoundly, he was so convinced again of his vocation that he was able to bring thirty men with him into the monastery. I don't know, I never brought thirty guys with me when I entered the seminary. I don't know how many men or women now today entering into the convent where religious life have done the same thing. But imagine the power and the persuasiveness of this man because he was utterly convinced of his vocation and he was able to inspire all the people to enter into the kingdom of God, to recognise their vocation and to serve the Lord in that way.

And he wrote the most beautiful commentaries. In fact, he writes about how the love of God is so powerful, especially commenting on the Song of Songs. He says that the Lord is constantly aching for us, for humanity to have this perfect union with each and every one of us. Does that sound like someone who's unfair or someone who's incredibly generous? We all make our own decision, and we ask God for the grace to decide—like Bernard—to always choose the Lord, whose love is so profound and so overwhelming, and He's so generous with us, not only in this life, but also by offering us eternal life in the life to come.