

15. July 2020

“All for the honor of God”

Jes 10, 5-7, 13-16

Woe to Assyria, rod of my anger, the club in their hands is my fury! I was sending him against a godless nation, commissioning him against the people who enraged me, to pillage and plunder at will and trample on them like the mud in the streets. But this was not his intention nor did his heart plan it so, for he dreamed of putting an end to them, of liquidating nations without number! For he thinks: 'By the strength of my own arm I have done this and by my own wisdom: how intelligent I have been! I have abolished the frontiers between peoples, I have plundered their treasures, like a hero, I have subjugated their inhabitants. My hand has found, as though a bird's nest, the riches of the peoples. Like someone collecting deserted eggs, I have collected the whole world while no one has fluttered a wing or opened a beak to squawk.' Does the axe claim more credit than the man who wields it, or the saw more strength than the man who handles it? As though a staff controlled those who raise it, or the club could raise what is not made of wood! That is why Yahweh Sabaoth is going to inflict leanness on his stout men, and beneath his glory kindle a fever burning like a fire.

Today the reading of the day gives us an insight into God's action with his people and also with the enemies.

In order to understand this passage correctly, we first need to recognize again and again that God cares for his people and is constantly striving to lead them to the right pledge. But it is all too familiar to us from many testimonies of the Holy Scripture that this was and still is a difficult undertaking. The people easily strayed from the Lord's instructions and got on the wrong track. But if the people do not listen to the instructions of the Lord, they come under the influence of hostile powers, be they of a spiritual nature or - as in this case - foreign kings. But God does not simply stand more or less helpless in the face of hostile powers, but knows how to integrate them into his plans.

So the king of Assyria becomes the breeding rod of Israel, or as it says in the text, the cudgel, who now, under the permission of God, haunts Israel for its crimes. What does he do? He robs like a robber and treads the people down like the mud of the street. What does the Lord want to show with this?

Israel itself is robbing God. For what is it other than robbery, when a person is entrusted with a good and then takes it for himself. Let us remember the parables of Jesus in the New Testament about the owner of the vineyard who is robbed by those to whom he has entrusted his vineyard (*cf. Mt 21,33-43*). In this case Jesus even foretells us that they will also kill the son of the owner (the heir), speaking of his own death.

In the appearance of the king of Assyria, God shows his people what they themselves do, namely to rob God and to trample the covenant like mud on the streets.

If we do not listen to the instructions of God, then we must learn by experience. But unfortunately it is so that even then you often need the "prophet" who explains things and circumstances from God!

But the king of Assyria is not justified by his actions as "cudgel of God". Also he robs God by attributing to himself his power, which is permitted by God, and so he increases his person.

Every kind of false pride entails humiliation as a consequence, as a good saying in Germany puts it. "Pride comes before a fall". Also the one who is integrated into God's plan as a rod of discipline has to answer to the Lord for his actions in which spirit they were made.

This message is important for us in many ways.

For our life of following Christ we should realize that God integrates all processes and circumstances into his plan. This also applies to the appearance of evil and to the devil himself. The plans of darkness are not autonomous. They are often unknown to those who carry out them but they are therefore not equal to the plans of God as if the outcome is still open. Therefore, when we speak of the war between the children of light and the children of darkness, it is right to always make it clear that the powers of darkness are already defeated on the cross of the Lord! But this victory of the Lamb still needs to be fully realized on earth.

Furthermore, it is a consolation to know that God will hold accountable those who can exercise authority in any way. Even if they consciously exercise authority in the name of God and have been commissioned by the Lord, they remain subject to the judgment of God as to how they exercise this authority.

Finally, it is essential for our own lives that we deal with all the gifts God gives us, with the many good things God is trusting to us as faithful stewards. We should not misuse anything for ourselves, and the more we are called to be responsible before God also for other people, the more carefully we have to be attentive that our life and all the good received serves the glory of God.

If possible, we should do all this not because we are afraid of the consequences, but out of love for the one from whom all good things come!