

15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962), the world-famous violinist, earned a fortune with his concerts and compositions, but he generously gave most of it away. So, when he discovered an exquisite violin on one of his trips, he wasn't able to buy it. Later, having raised enough money to meet the asking price, he returned to the seller, hoping to purchase that beautiful instrument. But to his great dismay it had been sold to a collector. Kreisler made his way to the new owner's home and offered to buy the violin. The collector said it had become his prized possession and he would not sell it. Keenly disappointed, Kreisler was about to leave when he had an idea. "Could I play the instrument once before it is consigned to silence?" he asked. Permission was granted, and the great virtuoso filled the room with such heart-moving music that the collector's emotions were deeply stirred. "I have no right to keep this violin to myself," he exclaimed. "It's yours, Mr. Kreisler. Take it into the world, and let people hear it."

A violin is a fancy wooden box to me. It is a beautiful collectible to another. But, it is an instrument of joy in the hands of a master.

Each of us has a destiny, yet often we don't know what that will be until we live it. Amos thought his destiny was to be a shepherd and a caretaker for sycamore trees. He was living near Bethlehem at a time when the nation was divided into the nation of Judah, where he lived, and the nation of Israel in the north. God called Amos to leave the sheep and the trees for a new pasture. He was to go north and preach to the king of Israel in his royal sanctuary at Bethel. He was told to tell the king that the nation would soon be defeated and the people sent into exile unless they changed their ways.

The king ruled over a nation that was prosperous and was at peace. He probably thought this farmer turned prophet was jealous of the wealth of Israel. Maybe he thought he was being paid by the king's enemies to bring this terrible message. Amos reminded the king that he was not a paid prophet. He didn't get a commission by a king or by any man. Instead, he was told by God to bring this message.

Jesus chose ordinary men, mostly fishermen and simple laborers to be his Apostles. He chose them to walk with Him on this journey. He wanted them to share in the mission of the Father. They were intrigued by this man Jesus who promised nothing yet seemed to be so confident. He told these early followers that if they came along for the journey they would see amazing things. They would see the power of God displayed. And they did.

But now Jesus tells them they will also participate in this mission. He sends them out in pairs to announce the Good News, preach repentance of sins, and bring healing to those who are sick or possessed with demons. I am sure they all looked at Him and looked at each other and said, "You've got to be kidding!" We know fishing, but now you want us to heal the sick and expel demons? Yes!

Those Apostles did go out unburdened by money or clothes or possessions. They had the assurance of Christ and the power of God. They had all they needed to bring a message to people that would change their lives. It certainly had changed theirs. Their destiny changed from being fishermen to being healers!

Jesus knew those early Apostles would do great things. He also knew they would experience disappointment and disillusionment. They might give up when they didn't see

results immediately. They might give up when they were rejected as beggars or when someone was not willing to change or welcome them. So, Jesus was wise enough to tell them not to lose their focus. If they are not accepted in one place, move on. The mission is too important to let disappointment discourage you.

You and I are called to be living witnesses. We were chosen by Christ to live holy lives. We were chosen to change the world. Yet, sometimes our sins bog us down. We don't feel chosen or holy. Maybe we don't want to change or be used by the Lord. Yet, Jesus looks lovingly at each of you and says, "I've got a destiny for you. I want you to show the world that there can be a different way. The power of sin and injustice seem invincible, but Christ has conquered the world."

At times perhaps, we have been seduced by the ways of the world too. We wonder why we should stand up for the unborn, for the sanctity of marriage, or for justice for the poor. It seems so hard. The Lord knows it's hard. He knows it can be discouraging to face up to ridicule, yet when we do we can see great things happen. It's all a matter of destiny: What kind of violin will you be?