



Come and See!

January 14, 2018

The Word...

Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.
I have waited, waited for the LORD,
and he stooped toward me and heard my cry.
And he put a new song into my mouth, a hymn to our God.
Sacrifice or offering you wished not, but ears open to obedience you gave me.
Holocausts or sin-offerings you sought not; then said I, "Behold I come."
In the written scroll it is prescribed for me, to do your will, O my God, is my delight,
(from Ps 40)

Pondering the Word ...

One method parenting experts suggest to calm a crying toddler or one having a tantrum is to stoop down so that we are at eye level with the child, then slowly lower our own voice to a whisper until things settle down. It takes great patience to do this and sometimes it works. And sometimes it doesn't—usually when we are in public and we imagine everyone is judging us and thinking, "I wish they would shut that kid up!" ☺

Interacting with a child—or anyone for that matter—in a gentle, quiet, non-threatening manner is always a good approach. It can diffuse tense or even violent situations. It reminds me of the passage from Isaiah 42: *"He will not cry out or raise his voice, or make his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed he will not break, a dimly burning wick he will not extinguish."*

The Lord hears our cries. He stoops down and comes to earth to live among us, to relate to us on our level, to put a new song in our mouths, new ears open to obedience; to teach us to be still and to do his will.

Emmanuel. Alleluia!

"...he came to share your plight, your fight, your night, and point you toward tomorrow." (Michael Moynahan, S.J.)

Living the Word...

Oh Lord God! How our world is sorely in need of quietness, stillness, a ratcheting down of tense, potentially relationship- and even world-ending violence!

It's a challenge these days maintaining that fine line between keeping informed and keeping our sanity. That's why time spent in prayer and reflection is so important. To paraphrase the theologian Karl Barth, we should read the news with the newspaper (or these days, the cell phone) in one hand and the Bible in the other. It is faith and hope in God's promise that allows us to weather the constant tantrums we see played out in the news; to avoid responding in kind to attacks and criticism; and to know *"that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."* (Rm 8:28)

See what you can do this week to promote peace and civil dialogue in your home or community. Imagine Jesus is there with you, helping and encouraging you. And pray. God knows—indeed he does—we need it!

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Jan 15: *“No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak. If he does, its fullness pulls away, the new from the old and the tear gets worse. Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined. Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins.”* (Mk 2: 18-22)

The two metaphors Jesus uses here seem contradictory to me. The first talks about the need to shrink the new in order to patch the old. Maybe we've had this experience—adapting our plans to keep the peace or rethinking our dreams in light of the dreams of others. But I find the second one more compelling. While the vine that yields the wine has not changed and will never, the wine itself is always new. Trying to contain it in old wineskins—antiquated ways of operating and thinking—is not going to work. We can either shrink to patch up the old or open ourselves to a brand new way. God tells us, “Behold, I am making all things new!” Will we shrink or become a new creation?

Jan 16: *(Samuel) also had Jesse and his sons invited to the sacrifice. As they came, he looked at Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is here before him.” ... In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any one of these.”* (1 Sm 15:16-23)

I wonder how David's brothers feel. Are they bitter like Jacob's sons were about Joseph? It has to be difficult as they each stand in front of Samuel, only to be rejected, especially in favor of the youngest one! The reading points out David is anointed “in the midst of his brothers,” so there is no getting around who is now in charge. How do we react when someone gets chosen over us? It's hard to look past the rejection, but as people of faith, we are called to trust that God “has plans for our welfare, not for woe” (Jer 29:11); that God has other things in store for us if we can accept and wait patiently for our call—a call that might not be the starring role, but one that will best serve God. In the long run, that is what will make for our peace.

Jan 17: *“All this multitude, too, shall learn that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves. For the battle is the LORD’s and he shall deliver you into our hands.”* (1 Sm 17:32-33, 37, 40-51)

So not by the sword or spear, but by a stone! Violence is still violence. Let's remember the historical context of this dramatic story of David and Goliath (and a lot of the Old Testament stories). The might of a nation's gods was judged by displays of power and the violent destruction of the enemy. But the message here is also not about the little guy versus the big guy, as secular society portrays it. It is all about faith, faith that “the battle is the Lord's.” Whatever the outcome, David demonstrates, and will continue to demonstrate throughout his life, an immovable faith in God's will, even when things don't go his way. David never doubts God's promises, so even when he sins gravely and is punished, he expects and accepts God's mercy. Let us pray today to be granted the grace of David's faith in God's unending fidelity.

Jan 18: *“My wanderings you have counted; my tears are stored in your flask; are they not recorded in your book?”* (Ps 56)

Some may read this and shudder, imagining God recording our every move in a big celestial book! But focus instead on the poetic expression of our tears being stored in God's flask. What a beautiful way to describe God's compassion! God is with us as we wander, close to us, the brokenhearted, as we weep for our sorrows, losses, and sins. “God will not look you over for medals, degrees, or diplomas, but for scars.” (Elbert Hubbard)

Jan 19: *“In the shadow of your wings I take refuge, till harm passes by.”* (Ps 57)

And once harm passes, what do we do? Well, some wander off far away and forget about God, only to come running back when harm again rears its head. Others choose to stay under God's wings, afraid to venture too far. God remains a constant presence for all, nurturing the timid and welcoming back the wanderers. But I imagine God likes it most when we are willing, like David, to go forth into the world, praising God for his protection, thanking God for his mercy, and allowing others to see how our faith emboldens us to meet the challenges the world presents. Today, again we pray: “Lord, grant us the faith of your servant, David.”

Jan 20: *His relatives...set out to seize him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”* (Mk 3: 20-21)

Love your enemies. Forgive and pray for those persecuting you. Hang out with thieves and prostitutes. Touch lepers. Turn the other cheek. Eat his flesh and drink his blood. Are you out of your mind too?