



Come and See!

January 21, 2018

The Word...

I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out.
From now on, let those having wives act as not having them,
those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing,
those buying as not owning, those using the world as not using it fully.
For the world in its present form is passing away.
(1 Cor 7:29-31)

Pondering the Word ...

The late, great Yankee baseball legend, Yogi Berra, known for his inadvertent, humorous responses to questions, was once asked by a reporter following an interview, "Hey, Yogi, what time is it?" Yogi's response: "You mean now?"

I wonder if Paul is getting tired of people asking him, "Is it time now? Is this when the Christ will return?"

In Greek, there are two words for time: "chronos," the actual passage of time, and "kairos," a concept based not on the ticking of the clock, but on it being the right time, the most opportune time for some event to occur or a person to act. In this passage, the word is kairos.

The advice Paul gives the Corinthians is as pertinent to us today--probably even more so. "Don't get lulled into routine. Pay attention. Go about your normal everyday lives with the awareness that we do not know the day or hour when the Lord will come."

The time to prepare for the coming of the Lord is now—right now. There is no better, no more opportune time. When Paul says "the world in its present form is passing away," he is instilling a sense of "chronos" urgency, yes, but he is also speaking a basic truth. The present is all we have. Use it now to prepare for that time when time as we know it is no more.

"You can't turn back the clock. But you can wind it up again."

(Bonnie Prudden)

Living the Word...

Most of us are slaves to our clocks and calendars. The goal is to live our "chronos" lives with "kairos" awareness, but how? In the morning, make a conscious choice to be aware and to love others. Throughout the day, ask God for help to be more aware. Midday, do a quick review: "Am I living in awareness?" (Imagine a big arrow with the words "You Are Here" right in front of you!) In the evening, do a more thorough examen of the day, offering it all—the good and the not-so-good—to God.

Be careful though to avoid making God another "to do" item. It won't work. God is not a "to do." God is a "to be." God-time is kairos time and works best as a way of life, not as another obligation. If you are just starting out though, develop a habit by making appointments with God as the first step to a new way of living.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Jan 22: *“If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.”* (Mk 3:22-30)

There is not much I can add to this statement that is not already obvious in our world. It is up to each of us to reach out in peace to our brothers and sisters--those related by blood, related in Christ, related by our common humanity. The kingdom is all of us—everyone--and the house is our earth. Let us search for and promote the things that unite us, not divide us. Practice peace and humility today.

Jan 23: *Then David, girt with a linen apron, came dancing before the LORD with abandon, as he and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts of joy.* (2 Sm 6:12b-15, 17-19)

I don't know about you, but this Old Testament passage makes me a bit squirmy. The image of David, barely clothed, dancing around like a madman is uncomfortable (read a bit further--it was frowned upon by Saul's daughter, too). But it's a good reminder that the Israelites were tribal, and people of their time. When you read ancient scripture, consider the context of the stories and glean the lessons that have meaning today. So what are we to learn here? Let's pray we approach our faith with the joy and exuberance of a David, that we are unabashed in our love for God. The linen apron thing—well, you may want to think twice about that!

Jan 24: *“Those (seeds) sown among thorns are people who hear the word, but worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the word, and it bears no fruit.”* (Mk 4:1-20)

This verse from The Parable of the Sower is good follow up to our reflection on Sunday. We might do just fine resisting the lure of riches and other temptations offered by the world, but what about the worries that confront us each day? Illness, addiction, financial concerns, moral decline, world events...the litany of anxiety-producing situations and events seems endless. Do we get so caught up in all the things that cause us angst that we fail to allow our faith to bear fruit? What is choking the word within you? Pray God will help you clear the thorns that keep you from flourishing.

Jan 25: *“But the Lord said to (Ananais), “Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and children of Israel, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name.”* (Acts 9:1-22)

Yeesch. God is giving Ananais quite a task. Not only is he sending him to meet the guy who's been dragging folks like Ananais away in chains, but he is also the one to let Saul know what he will suffer! Being a bearer of the Good News can sometimes be a challenge. The news we bring may not be all sunshine and flowers. The role of a disciple is hard work, and like Ananais, we may balk at the call. But remember: Ananais is also the one who brings Saul healing, who opens his eyes. If you are struggling with a call from God, pray to be given the gift of Ananais: courage in spite of doubt.

Jan 26: *“To what shall we compare the Kingdom of God? It is like a mustard seed... the smallest of all the seeds. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade.”* (Mk 4:26-34)

I once visited an arboretum and was struck by the beauty of a particular tree. When I asked the arborist if such a tree would grow in my backyard, she smiled and said, “Yes, it would...and your great-grandchildren will really enjoy it!” When we hear Jesus describe the mustard seed as “springing up,” we logically think the seed becomes a large bush in no time. But the type of plant to which he is referring (common in the Mideast) takes many years to grow large enough to house the birds. Such is the Kingdom of God. The tiny seeds we sow today can take many, many years to come to fruition. Be patient. Have faith in God's timing.

Jan 27: *“The rich man would not take from his own flocks; instead he took the poor man's lamb...”* *David grew angry: “As the LORD lives, the man who has done this merits death!” Then Nathan said: “You are the man!* (2 Sm 12:1-17)

This famous story illustrates perfectly our ready tendency to point out the splinter in another's eye while ignoring the plank in our own. This is tough stuff: the hardheartedness of the rich man and David's egregious crimes of adultery and murder. When judgment of others sneaks into the picture for me, it's for things far less serious. It's the everyday, run-of-the-mill oversights I “see” plainly in others that I fail to notice in myself. And even if I am aware of my failings, I often come up with some excuse, a reason for my lack of awareness. Jesus tells us to stop judging so we will not be judged. How can we put this lesson into practice? Before we jump to conclusions about another's motives, let's look in an imaginary mirror: “When have I failed to love, to do what is right?” Then take one more step: look upon yourself and the other as God does--with compassion.