



Come and See!

April 15, 2018

The Word...

"These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."
(from Lk 24:35-48)

Pondering the Word...

I wonder how educated the Apostles were regarding Scripture. It's likely they were observant Jews who followed the law as spelled out to them by the scribes and other learned elders, but their own knowledge was limited to rote recitation without much reflection. They, like a lot of us, grew up repeating rituals and reading or hearing the same Scripture over and over. Yet, we also acknowledge God makes all things new, so why wouldn't that be true for the wisdom and guidance of Scripture as well?

We hear Jesus *"opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."* He allowed for their intellects to grasp the Truth of his life and resurrection. But it is was up to them to make that Truth a reality in their own lives and in the lives of those they touched.

It was up to them, as it is up to us, to make Scripture dynamic and alive for the world in which we live.

Living the Word...

In the responsorial psalm we read tomorrow, the psalmist says, *"Your servant meditates on your statutes."* Do you meditate on Scripture? Do you know how to meditate on Scripture? There are several prayer forms that can help us: imaginative prayer, engaging all our senses to put ourselves in a Scripture story; Lectio Divina, reading and reciting a short Bible passage or inspirational poem or brief essay, focusing in on one word or phrase that captures our attention, and allowing it to settle into our hearts. There's also Visio Divina, sitting quietly looking closely at an icon or art piece that depicts of Bible scene. Or (and this is how I try to write these reflections), you can consider the main lesson or idea communicated in a passage and apply it to current situations and events, to make it real today.

I hear lots of people say, "I can't meditate," and I usually respond, "Of course, you can't." Enlightenment through Scripture is a gift of the Spirit. We can't just "do" it. But, we can make ourselves available and pray for the grace: "Speak, Lord Jesus, your servant is listening. Open my mind to understand your word. Open my heart to be willing to live your word every day."

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Apr 16: *Then they instigated some men to say, "We have heard him speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God." They stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes...and presented false witnesses...* (Acts 6: 8-15)

I started writing and realized I had focused on this same topic two years ago. But it seems to have gotten worse, so it bears repeating. Consider how extreme activists and politicians incite people's fears and perpetrate falsehoods today. It's more dangerous now due to the anonymity and impunity of the internet. As Christians, we are called to take a stand against fear-mongering and lies and to stay focused on Christ's legacy of love. Righteous anger is sometimes justified, but it must be nonviolent and nonjudgmental; it does not hate or seek revenge. Remember, the people Jesus could not abide were the hypocrites. Think about it.

Apr 17: *"You hide them in the shelter of your presence."* (Ps 31)

What does it look like to hide in the shelter of God's presence? Do you imagine a monastery or a dark church that can literally hide you away (like those under threat of deportation)? How about the brave souls among us who go to war-torn areas to care for innocent victims of civil war, or for that matter, those who continue to minister in inner cities where violence is a real threat? All of us have times when we need to pull away from the distractions and difficulties of life; remember, Jesus did this often (and it's interesting: it was to the "lonely places" in the desert or mountains that he sought his Father's presence, not in the sanctuary). But like Jesus, we are also called to recognize the shelter of God's presence in our everyday lives to endure the sufferings and threats to our peace; in those we love and in the poor and needy; in nature and in our regular worship. Seek God's presence today. Let your faith shelter and protect you in plain sight.

Apr 18: *There broke out a severe persecution of the Church and all were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria, except for the Apostles... those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.* (Acts 8:1b-8)

Stephen's been stoned to death, the Apostles are hidden together in some secret location, and the new church is operating as an underground organization, looked at as radical and incendiary. Just like the abolitionists during the Civil War; just like the early days of the Civil Rights movement; just like the churches sheltering law-abiding undocumented immigrants today. But the message of Truth was then, as it is today, all about love, mercy, and inclusion. Those who preached this message were willing to die for the Truth. We tend to see underground movements as nefarious, and indeed some are. But it takes a discerning eye and an open mind and heart to truly look at what is disturbing the status quo and ask: "What would Jesus think about the message and means of these "radical and incendiary" groups? Do they preach and live the Truth?"

Apr 19: *The angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, "Get up and head south on the road..."* (Acts 8:26-40)

There are four instances in the readings this week when we hear the short command: "Get up." The Lord says it here to Philip, and then to Saul (after he is knocked silly); and again to Ananais (who balks at the command). Peter says it to a paralytic, with the additional instruction to "make your bed." It is as if Jesus is saying, "Look, I got up. I suffered and was raised, but now it's your turn." How are you called to get up?

Apr 20: *Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus.* (Acts 9:1-20)

I think Saul likes control. Here, he's rendered sightless, dependent on others to lead and heal him. Just as he will have to rely solely on God to do and suffer what he must for the Lord's name. Pedro Arrupe, SJ, the late Superior General of the Jesuits, composed this prayer after he had a disabling stroke: *"More than ever I find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life from my youth. But now there is a difference; the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in God's hands."* A good prayer for us as we confront the changes and challenges in our lives.

Apr 21: *"When I appealed to him in words, praise was on the tip of my tongue."* (Ps 66)

How often I appeal to God for this intention or that blessing, but forget the praise that should ever be "on the tip of my tongue." Let us praise and thank God today for everything! All is gift!