



Come and See!

June 3, 2018

The Word...

When Moses came to the people
and related all the words and ordinances of the LORD,
they all answered with one voice,
"We will do everything that the LORD has told us."
Moses then wrote down all the words of the LORD...
Taking the book of the covenant, he read it aloud to the people,
who answered, "All that the LORD has said, we will heed and do."
(from Ex 24: 3-8)

Pondering the Word... *"We will do everything that the LORD has told us."*

"Sure. Right. Tell me another one." This text is found in Exodus 24. A mere eight chapters later, the Israelites are dancing like maniacs around a golden calf. You know, they were probably sincere when they said they would do what the Lord had instructed. They heard what Moses had to say—twice, in fact—but were likely blissfully unaware of what they were agreeing to. I've been guilty of that, many times over.

Scripture is not a history book. Sure, some parts relate battles and the progression of Jewish kings and yes, there are sections that pertain only to the time the books were written. But if we fail to look into the meaning, and how Scripture applies to us today, we may find ourselves making promises we can't keep. And then we risk one of two things: an overriding sense of failure and guilt that keeps us from growing in grace; or, as Pope Francis tells us, falling prey to spiritual corruption, an untended and lukewarm faith, an even greater risk than the fall of a sinner (*Gaudete Et Exsultate*, 164-65).

We strive to do everything the Lord has told us, and God sees the sincerity in our hearts. And we fail and will continue to fail. But let's make sure we are not failing due to ignorance, blindness, or self-satisfaction. Let's look at what the Lord has told us with new eyes and open hearts. Let's look to Jesus to teach us how to live.

Living the Word...

When you read Scripture or say prayers, are you aware? Do you ever just stop and say, "Hey, what does this mean? How does this pertain to me? What am I agreeing to?" I'm not suggesting we all become biblical scholars—that has its own risks—but just take time to ask the Spirit what message the prayer or verse has for you and your life.

Here's a prayer suggestion: read through the text of the Beatitudes (you can find a good explanation of them in the Pope's exhortation). Really reflect on what it means to be poor in spirit, merciful, a peacemaker, etc. Which ones are easy for you? Give thanks to God. Then talk to God honestly about those you don't understand or find next to impossible to live. God rejoices when we grow in awareness because it is through awareness that we grow in grace and it is through grace we grow in holiness and grow the Kingdom. Give it a try.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Jun 4: *Jesus began to speak to the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders in parables. (Mk 12:1-12)*

There's a TV game show, "The Chase," that basically pits this guy who seems to know the answer to every question against teams of people who try and trip him up. It's kind of similar to what Jesus has to endure in the twelfth chapter of Mark's Gospel. First, it is the chief priests and the elders. They are not successful in trapping Jesus, so they send in some Pharisees and Herodians who also fail. Next comes the Sadducees with a far-fetched story about a woman who marries seven brothers, and then finally, a scribe who admires Jesus' debating skills and his wisdom. These are educated men. They clearly understand the messages of Jesus' parables, but instead of listening to what he has to say, most decide to resort to the only means still at their disposal—violence. Sound familiar? How well are we listening to the messages Jesus has for us?

Jun 5: *"Whose image and inscription is this?" They replied to him, "Caesar's." So Jesus said to them, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." (Mt 12:13-17)*

"Then God said: 'Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness.' God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good." (Gen 1) "See, upon the palms of my hand, I have written your name." (Is 49:16) We are made in God's image, and that is VERY good. Our names are inscribed on the palms of God's hands. Thank God for you are "wonderfully made." (Ps 139) and make a return to God by using your gifts to further the Kingdom.

Jun 6: *"To you, O Lord, I lift up my eyes." (Ps 123)*

Lifting up our eyes and hearts to God is a good thing, something many of us need to spend a lot more time doing. We are so busy with the things of this world, we fail to quiet ourselves and to gaze upon God and let God gaze upon us. But we are also reminded, like the disciples at the Ascension, not to spend all our time gazing upwards, lest we miss God's very presence right in front of us. In order to "pray always," let's remember where Jesus said we would find him: in the hungry, the sick, the prisoner, the poor.

Jun 7: *"Remind people of these things and charge them before God to stop disputing about words. This serves no useful purpose since it harms those who listen. (2 Tm 2:8-15)*

Oh, it's so easy for us to get distracted...debating the meaning of this word or phrase or that doctrine. In the Pope's recent exhortation, he advises us to go back to the Beatitudes, what he calls, "a Christian's identity card." "Jesus explained with great simplicity what it means to be holy..." Let's not get too caught up in words that can harm and divide. Let our actions and works of love and mercy say all we need to say.

Jun 8: *"I drew them with bands of love; I fostered them like one who raises an infant to his cheeks; yet, though I stooped to feed my child, they did not know I was their healer. My heart is overwhelmed, my pity is stirred." (Hos 11: 1, 3-4, 8-9)*

Such a beautiful image of God's love for us! I am particularly moved by the message in the second line: we may recognize God as the one who feeds us, who gives us all that is good, but we may not allow God to be our healer. A childlike fear of punishment from the one who provides for us can get in the way of our experiencing the God's true heart, overwhelmed by care and mercy. Allow God to feed, love, and heal you.

Jun 9: *"For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires ...they will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths." (2 Tm 4:1-8)*

Well, this is topical! Paul is warning Timothy that, despite his best efforts, "teachers" will arise who will tell the people what they want to hear. These teachers will promulgate myths, and the sound doctrine of Christ's words will be modified and disregarded. I invite you to consider two things: The first is to read the statement on www.reclaimingjesus.org. This statement, published as a sermon on Ash Wednesday, is the product of a Christian interdenominational group aggrieved by what they see as a hijacking of Christianity by those who would promote bigotry and racism. Read it as I did, without preconceived notions or assumptions; then ask yourself: What would Jesus say about this statement? The second thing is to encourage all people of goodwill to see the new documentary on Pope Francis--*A Man of His Word*--and ask the same thing: What does the Pope have to say that is not in lockstep with the path Jesus set for us? Earlier in this same reading, Paul tells Timothy to "proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient." "Inconvenience" gets in my way a lot. How will I challenge myself to make changes and follow Christ's path more humbly?