



Come and See!

June 10, 2018

The Word...

After the man, Adam, had eaten of the tree,
the LORD God called to the man and asked him, "Where are you?"
He answered, "I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked,
so I hid myself." Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked?
You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!"
The man replied, "The woman whom you put here with me—
she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it."
The LORD God then asked the woman, "Why did you do such a thing?"
The woman answered, "The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it."
(from Gn 3:9-15)

Pondering the Word...

Who told Adam he was naked? Well, unless the animals back then could talk or Adam was also Dr. Doolittle, the only one who could have told him was Eve. But she had also recognized her nakedness and was off hiding as well.

God doesn't let Adam answer; God knows the answer, but if God had given Adam the opportunity, how honest do you think he would have been? "I told myself I was naked." "My newfound conscience told me and I admit my sin." Instead, of course, the first blame game begins: "Well, it was that woman YOU put here with me—she did it." Then Eve points the finger at the serpent, another of God's creatures. So even from the dawn of time, we have been looking for someone or something else to blame, and if possible, we even like to blame God—heck, God still gets the rap on insurance policies for the bad stuff that happens!!

I'm not going to venture the theological explanation as to why God does not give Adam the chance to ask for mercy, but I do know that God gives us that opportunity every moment of every day. Through Christ, we are given an unending supply of mercy and grace if we are willing, not to point fingers, but to recognize our own shortcomings and sins, ask for mercy, and make amends. And, as if that was not enough, each time we receive that grace and mercy with a truly contrite heart, we are given strength to improve our lives as well.

Living the Word...

How willing are you to stand naked and unashamed before God?

As a rule (and there are exceptions, of course ☺), it's young children who seem to show no embarrassment about being naked; it is those around them that make them feel their bodies are something of which they should be ashamed. It's all about innocence and self-acceptance. Not many of us get through this life without scars, and most of us choose to keep those scars under wraps. But how we look at those scars really matters. Are they constant reminders of accidents, hurt, and pain? Or do they represent healing and care?

Nakedness means vulnerability before God. Do we find ourselves hiding or blaming others for our mistakes? Or do we allow God's mercy to heal our wounds and affirm our beauty in his eyes?

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Jun 11: *"Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."* (Mt 5:1-12)

I'm reading a provocative, albeit controversial translation of the New Testament by scholar David Bentley Hart. While one might question his strictly literal approach, his scholarship is impressive. What has struck me is his introductory commentary about how counter-cultural the early Christian community really was. *"When one truly ventures into the world of the first Christians, one enters a company of 'radicals' (for want of a better word)... guided by faith in a world-altering revelation [with] values almost absolutely inverse to the recognized social, political, economic, and religious truths ...of almost every age of human culture."* When reading the Beatitudes, it can seem what Jesus asks of us is next to impossible. So, it's comforting to read Chapter Three of the Pope's new exhortation as well. The Pope doesn't mince words either, but provides real advice and encouragement on how we are called to live out Jesus' radical message today.

Jun 12: *"Men of rank, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love what is vain and seek after falsehood?"* (Ps 4)
Oh, how little we have changed as a species! We call upon men and women who lead in any capacity to enliven and invigorate their hearts. You are called, not to feed your egos or to perpetrate lies, but to create an open, welcoming environment where truth and love can flourish. We, the people, can throw up our hands in disgust or can work in our own communities to build a better world. Where is your heart?

Jun 13: *"They multiply their sorrows who court other gods."* (Ps 16)

There's lots of self-help advice these days telling us, in order to be happy, we need to get rid of most of our "stuff." You know how it goes: You clear out the basement, take everything to a flea market, and then come home with more stuff than you brought! Is our desire for stuff "courting other gods?" It's probably not that extreme, but it's worth reflection. What are the "gods" in your life? The latest gadget? Your kids? Your reputation? A cause? Do these other gods make you happy? Do you want to change? Pray to the one true God for strength, but also remember, *"Life has no remote...Get up and change it yourself."* (Mark Cooper)

Jun 14: *"Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother."* (Mt 5:20-26)

Does this passage mean we shouldn't go to church if we're angry, or have hurt or been hurt by someone? I don't think so. That's the time when we need God's presence all the more. But perhaps it's a good idea to look a little deeper. Is our intention to forgive or reconcile, even if now is not the time? Is the gift we are offering to God our desire to be healed? Or is our heart filled with malice and ill-intent? Have we gone through the motions of reconciliation, but still harboring anger? God knows the intentions of our hearts. A heart intent on reconciliation will derive peace and comfort at the altar; one putting on a show will find no peace.

Jun 15: *The LORD was not in the wind...not in the earthquake... not in the fire. After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound.* (1 Kgs 19:9a, 11-16)

This stirring reading from 1 Kings doesn't mention a flood, but the message is the same. The historic town where I live has been hit yet again with devastating floods. Not two years ago, a once-in-a-hundred-year flash flood destroyed businesses and took lives; the town was just hit again with an even worse flood last weekend. There are areas in the world where such floods are commonplace, and having something like this so close to home stirs in me compassion for those who live where such devastation occurs. I pray fervently that those impacted will hear the voice and see the face of the Living God in the aftermath through the kindness and generosity of others. How will I bring the quiet, gentle voice and hand of God to those in need today?

Jun 16: *"Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.'"* (Mt 5: 33-37)

Have you ever tried being this direct? In casual conversation, such a terse reply would be rude. Even Jesus, in his discussions with the elders, often replies with a question. Jesus is not suggesting we be rude or avoid engaging in civil debate. He is talking about being the kind of person whose word is good. He means taking responsibility for what we believe and sticking to it, not hedging or finding outs or excuses for ourselves. The next time you hear yourself hedging or uttering the usual, "yeah, but" or "no, but," (this happens a lot when someone asks us to take on a project!) pause for a moment to see what is keeping you from being honest.