



Come and See!

July 30, 2017

The Word...

God said, "Ask something of me and I will give it to you."
Solomon answered: "O LORD, my God, you have made me, your servant,
king to succeed my father David;
but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act. ...
Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart
to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong."
(from *1 Kgs 3:5, 7-12*)

We know that all things work for good for those who love God,
who are called according to his purpose.
(from *Rom 8:28-30*)

Pondering the Word...

Solomon is wise beyond his years. He is a mere youth and yet already recognizes the awesome responsibility he's been given. He asks for an understanding heart so he can judge God's people fairly and compassionately. This shows great maturity from the get-go, to want what is best for Israel.

But as his life plays out, he falls prey to sin and the worship of other gods (1Kgs 11). It seems that in his quest to do what is right for others, he loses sight of what is right for himself. Has power and wealth, and the accolades he receives for his wisdom (1Kgs 10) blinded him to the essential need to walk humbly each day with God? Does he think that because he desires and does right by others, his own soul does not need tending or is somehow immune to temptation?

All gifts—material, physical, intellectual, and spiritual— require us to treat them with reverence and care. We can't take them for granted or assume they will always be there at our disposal. Guarding our giftedness requires using them for good—for others and for ourselves—with humility and gratitude to the One from whom our gifts come.

Living the Word...

Paul reminds us all things work for good for those who are called *according to God's purpose*. Things turn out well when we are cued in to God's will and patiently strive to carry out that will by the way in which we live. Of course, we are called to serve others, but if we are not careful and mindful of our own souls, that service can become a god in itself. Jesus invites us to come away and rest, not only to process our experiences and refresh ourselves, but also to ensure God's will does not become supplanted by our own.

If your life is dedicated to God in service, take time to sit quietly in prayer. Ask God to bless your work and your decisions. Find others dedicated to service with whom you can share thoughts, feelings and challenges. (Note for those aged 50 or better: the Ignatian Volunteer Corps can provide a community for both service and spiritual growth. Check out their website—ivcusa.org—to see if there's a community in your area.)

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Jul 31: *Aaron replied, "Let anyone who has gold jewelry take it off. They gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out." (Ex 32:15-24, 30-34)*

This passage reminds me of a naughty kid who gets caught with the evidence of wrongdoing: "I just turned on the faucet and the whole room flooded—it's not my fault." "I was playing nicely with the dog, and he knocked the lamp over." Aaron washes his hands and blames the whole golden calf incident on the evil Israelites. He admits his involvement, but doesn't take responsibility. It reminds me of my sins of omission, when I fail to take a stand on societal evil or remain politically inactive; when I tacitly support companies whose business practices conflict with what I say are my values. I do not have the luxury of being surprised when a "golden calf" emerges from the fires I feed with my complacency. Consider how these thoughts resonate in your life.

Aug 1: *Anyone who wished to consult the LORD would go to this meeting tent outside the camp. (Ex 33:7-11)*

Where do you go to consult the Lord? The message here is pretty obvious. The tent is the place where the word of God is kept. For Christians, the Word of God is found in our meeting places of worship. It is the ideal place to consult the Lord. But I get the impression the meeting tent was not necessarily a place where lots of people gathered at once. I think an important nuance is that the meeting tent was "outside the camp." Outside the normal hustle and bustle of everyday life. Now, don't get me wrong...I'm not saying our coming together in community to worship is not important; indeed, it is an essential part of our faith life! But there is also the need for quiet prayer, away from community. Think about visiting your place of worship at times other than on the Sabbath. Or create special "meeting tent" of your own where you can consult the Lord, away from the noise and busyness.

Aug 2: *When Moses entered the presence of the LORD, he removed the veil until he came out again. Then the children of Israel would see that the skin of Moses' face was radiant; so he would again put the veil over his face. (Ex 34:29-35)*

I guess Moses could have gone off by himself somewhere or just stayed in the tent hanging out with God. But he doesn't. He always comes back out to let the people know what the Lord has to say. He puts on the veil so as not to scare them, but goes about working and eating and living life, just like they do. They get a glimpse of how Moses, a flesh and blood human being, can be so close to God and yet live like everyone else. And they just might begin to imagine how this can be possible for them, too. Jesus does the same thing for us. Can you imagine this closeness is possible for you?

Aug 3: *"Every scribe who has been instructed in the Kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old." (Mt 13:47-53)*

The scribes are the interpreters of the law. They know the Law of Moses and the prophets (the old), but the world has changed. It's time to look at those laws in light of the new reality found in Christ. In his book, *Jesus Before Christianity*, Albert Nolan, O.P. writes, "The beginning of faith in Jesus is the attempt to read the signs of our times as Jesus read the signs of his times.... We cannot merely repeat what Jesus said; but we can begin to analyze our times in the same spirit as he analyzed his times." We might ask, "If Jesus was alive today, what changes would he strive to bring about?" Jesus is alive and making all things new. Let's take a look in our storerooms. Are we bringing out the same old messages and laws? Maybe it's time for something new.

Aug 4: *He did not work many mighty deeds (in Nazareth) because of their lack of faith. (Mt 13: 54-58)*

Make no mistake: Jesus' ability to work mighty deeds was not and is not dependent us. But we can't be open to miracles if we don't look at life through the eyes of faith. See what miracles you can help Jesus work by living your faith today.

Aug 5: *May God have pity on us and bless us; may he let his face shine upon us. So may your way be known upon earth; among all nations, your salvation. (Ps 67)*

How well does your nation make God's way known upon the earth? These days, it's easy to feel hopeless. That's why our prayers for God's pity and blessings are so vital. Pray fervently today for God's salvation.