



Come and See!

September 24, 2017

The Word...

Seek the LORD while he may be found, call him while he is near.
(from Is 55:6-9)

The LORD is near to all who call upon him,
to all who call upon him in truth.
(from Ps 145)

Pondering the Word...

Chapter 55 in Isaiah is entitled, *"An Invitation to Grace."* It begins with the familiar words, "All you who are thirsty, come to the water." God invites us to grace. We know grace is a gift. There is nothing we can do to earn it. But that doesn't mean we can't avail ourselves to the invitation and seek God while he is near.

How easy is it for you to sense God's presence, God's nearness? For some, it might be easiest in the confines of an empty church or temple. Others find God in the middle of a rousing worship service. Some feel God's presence in the natural world; the gifted among us see God in their fellow human beings, especially the poor.

But unfortunately, there are a lot of people hard-pressed to find God anywhere. The drone of everyday living drowns out any whisper of God's voice. Neon lights and cell phones blind us to God's presence in common places, people, and things.

So thank goodness today's psalm offers us a good suggestion of where to find God: God is near, God is present, God listens to all who call upon him in truth.

Living the Word...

Grab your Bible and turn to Isaiah 55. It's a lovely little chapter that speaks gently, but realistically about our relationship with God. It's only 13 verses, so spend a few minutes reading and reflecting on what God is inviting you to and what he expects: 'Come to me. Listen. Forsake wickedness. Accept that you will not understand my thoughts and my ways. Do my will. Be joyful. Be at peace.'

No, we cannot earn grace, but we can avail ourselves to its omnipresence by calling upon God as we go through our day. Ask God to guide you, to lead you to his will; to strengthen you when you are tempted or discouraged. And don't forget to call upon God and offer your gratitude for all his gifts, and your praise for his mercy and fidelity. Seek the Lord. God is always near, ready and willing to take your call!

*"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live;
and I will make an everlasting covenant with you."*

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Sep 25: *"To anyone who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he seems to have will be taken away."* (Lk 8:16-18)

This verse, taken out of context, seems pretty harsh. Why would the one "who has" be given more, and the one "who has not" have what he or she has taken away? What is Jesus is talking about here? This passage is about "the light." When a lamp is lit, it is not hidden, not left unattended. It is placed where all can see. Jesus is talking about the Light of the Spirit. If we are willing to engage the Light through prayer, and allow it shine for the world, we will be blessed with more and more Light. But if we hide or deny our Light, it will grow dim from lack of tending and use. If you haven't been tending to your Light, take heart. Remember a spark always burns within and can be rekindled through reconciliation, prayer, and good works.

Sep 26: *The children of Israel—priests, Levites, and the other returned exiles—celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.* (Ezr 6: 7-8, 12, 14-20)

Reflecting on the story of the Jews returning from exile, I can't help but think of the millions of refugees fleeing their homelands due to extreme poverty, natural disasters, and oppressive, murderous regimes. In comments last year, the Dalai Lama shocked people by saying there were too many refugees in Europe. His point though was that while we are called to take into our care those fleeing for their lives, the ultimate goal is for refugees to return home and, with the help of wealthier nations, rebuild their homelands (read in the Book of Ezra what Kings Cyrus and Darius do for the Jews!). Let's pray today for those countries who've opened their doors and their hearts to refugees, and for the refugees themselves, but also for a broader focus on our global community, that we will work to establish peace and sustainable existence for every person and homeland.

Sep 27: *"In the land of my exile I praise him and show his power and majesty to a sinful nation."* (Tb 13)

This verse speaks of hope. Tobit is living in exile, a captive in Nineveh. He is suffering, he is blind, and he prays for God to allow him to die. But the Lord shows him mercy and renews his hope. Even in the face of continued exile in a sinful nation, Tobit sings of God's majesty and power, instilling hope in his fellow countrymen and women. There are times these days when I get discouraged, when it feels like I am living in a sinful nation, a sinful world. My faith calls me to live in hope and to praise God so others may find hope as well. See what you can do today to demonstrate hope in God's mercy and salvation.

Sep 28: *"The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD." "Is it time for you to dwell in your own paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Thus says the LORD: "Consider your ways! You have sown much, but brought in little; you have eaten, but not been satisfied...have clothed yourselves, but not been warmed..."* (Hg 1:1-8)

The Judeans are not quite ready to rebuild the temple. They are still trying to sort out their lives and get settled in their homeland. God, through the prophet Haggai, calls them to look closely at their lives. 'Yes, you're faring well now, but your lives are incomplete. Without worship and gratitude to the source of your blessings, your achievements are hollow and never enough.' Take a close look at your life. Do your blessings fail to fulfill you? Make sure to take time to say thank you to God. Don't allow your spiritual house to lie in ruins.

Sep 29: *Love for life did not deter them from death.* (Rv 12: 7-12)

This beautiful little verse is buried in the drama of the Book of Revelations. John is extolling the sacrifices of the early Christian martyrs, and encouraging those, like himself, who are suffering under Roman rule. He is referring here to eternal life in Christ, but the message can apply in our daily lives as well. I think of first responders to disasters, those willing to risk and give their own lives so that others might have a chance to live. We pray for them and for ourselves, that the fear of death will never keep us from living the truth.

Sep 30: *"Pay attention to what I am telling you." They didn't understand and were afraid to ask him.* (Lk 9: 43-45)

Are there passages in Scripture that, even when you pay attention, you don't understand? Don't be afraid to ask God to enlighten you, particularly if the passage is unsettling. Stay with it and pray with it. There's likely an important message that will open you up to wider perspectives and greater insights.