



Come and See!

October 22, 2017

The Word...

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, Cyrus,
whose right hand I grasp, subduing nations before him,
and making kings run in his service,
opening doors before him and leaving the gates unbarred:
For the sake of Jacob, my servant, of Israel, my chosen one,
I have called you by your name,
giving you a title, though you knew me not.
I am the LORD and there is no other, there is no God besides me.
It is I who arm you, though you know me not,
so that toward the rising and the setting of the sun
people may know that there is none besides me. I am the LORD, there is no other.
(Is 45: 1, 4-6)

Pondering the Word ...

King Cyrus was not a Jew, not one of the chosen of Israel. Yet chosen he was by God to make straight the path for the return of the children of God. Cyrus was a wise and compassionate king. In his wisdom, he allowed the nations he conquered to maintain their gods, their customs, their lands. Historians say he was the first leader of his time to put into place principles of basic human rights. He unknowingly allowed himself to be a channel for wisdom and mercy, and in the process, reaped the benefits of God's grace for himself nonetheless.

God often chooses unsuspecting people or unlikely events to bring about what is best for his children. While Cyrus' benevolence to the Jews is obvious, our experiences may be less so: an encounter with someone whose beliefs are different from ours provides fruitful ground for our growth; an anonymous kind act for our benefit; the person in need we are serving teaches us a valuable lesson (that has happened for me many times); a difficult illness or loss opens our heart for the first time to allow the compassion and care of others.

Or perhaps we have been that person who unknowingly provided a channel of God's grace. Cyrus was not bound by The Ten Commandments, but his God-given nature was one of goodness. When our true God-given nature shines through, we might not be aware of how we impact others. We are "doing good" just by being ourselves, and the benefits of God's grace opens doors for us to share even more of that grace!

Living the Word...

Can you recall a time when someone you'd least expect made straight a path for you? A situation that on the surface looked dismal, but nurtured great growth or a new perspective? How about a time when you learned after the fact you had unknowingly provided guidance and care to someone? Those moments are charged with God's grace, and we can do nothing but offer gratitude for such gifts. Reflect today on people and situations that have graced you in a profound way. Try to recapture the feeling you had. Give thanks.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Oct 23: *“A rich man had a bountiful harvest. ‘What shall I do, I do not have space to store my harvest?’ I shall build larger barns to store all my grain and I shall say, ‘Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!’”* (Lk 12: 13-22 adapted)

Parable Revisited: *“A rich man had a bountiful harvest. ‘What shall I do, I do not have space to store my harvest?’ I’ll keep just what I need for my family and go into the countryside and towns giving my bounty to the poor and I shall say, ‘Now as for you, you have been blessed with God’s abundance. Eat, drink, be joyful! The Lord has shared his goodness through you.’ And God said to him, ‘Oh wise and generous one. Soon you will join me to partake of the harvest that never ends. The things you have shared with those in need will continue to nourish their bodies and souls, and your name will be written upon their hearts.’”*

Oct 24: *“Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more.”* (Rom 5: 12, 15, 17-19, 20-21)

“It is in the realm of mercy that we truly meet God.” (Anthony Bloom) The God I thought I knew before receiving forgiveness was a vengeful, angry God. The God I know now is a constant, loving, illuminating presence that fills the dark crevasses and corners of my life. Paul’s words don’t give us license to sin; they remind us God’s grace is always available to us. If we are open, we will feel that grace most profoundly when sorrow, evil, and sin threaten to extinguish the light. If you are surrounded by darkness, don’t go it alone. Open up to grace.

Oct 25: *“Do not present the parts of your bodies to sin as weapons for wickedness, but as weapons for righteousness.”*

(Rom 6:12-18) The image of our bodies as weapons is unnerving. We might think Paul is talking about “sins of flesh,” and that may well be his focus, but succumbing to self-indulgence of our hearts and minds can often lead to wickedness far more damaging and despicable than things like gluttony, adultery, and drunkenness. Just check the nightly news for more on that. So what would our bodies as weapons of righteousness be like? Avoiding the temptations of the flesh, yes, but so much more: standing up in the face in injustice, advocating for sensible laws to protect *everyone’s* right to life and the basic essentials of life, welcoming refugees. Consider how your body, mind, and heart can be a nonviolent weapon for God.

Oct 26: *“But what profit did you get then from the things of which you are now ashamed?”* (Rom 6:19-23)

“Ok, Paul. I’ll take a shot at this. At the time, aside from immediate gratification, no, I did not profit much and yes, I was ashamed. But it was also that shame that led me to seek God’s mercy, to truly meet God for the first time. (See Tuesday’s quote from Anthony Bloom) Felix Culpa: ‘Oh, happy fault that merited such and so great a Redeemer’ may have been about the fall, but it resonates in the life of each one of us who has met God through mercy.” How would you answer Paul’s rhetorical question?

Oct 27: *“For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want.”* (Rom 7:18-25)

Great prayer material from Paul this week! I think most people tend towards the first half of Paul’s thought—sins of omission—rather than the second half—sins of commission. While we hear the stories of those who commit evil, I’d say most of us are pretty good at following the “I shall not” type of commandments, but we struggle with doing the good that we want. We are so busy that we can often overlook the chances we have every day to show God’s love. In *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis explains this well through the words of Uncle Screwtape to his nephew, Wormwood: *“It is funny how mortals always picture us (devils) as putting things into their minds; in reality, our best work is done by keeping things out.”* Spend time today reflecting, not on sins you’ve committed, but on opportunities for good you have missed. Ask for grace to be open and aware.

Oct 28: *“Through (Christ Jesus) the whole structure is held together.”* (Eph 2: 19-22)

In his sermons and writings, Pope Francis often warns against “spiritual worldliness” which puts something or someone other than Christ at the center of our faith, no matter how righteous the call or how holy the person. Jesus holds the whole structure together. And where do we find him? The Pope reminds us using Jesus’ own words: on the periphery of society—with the poor, the hungry, the thirsty, the prisoner, the naked, the stranger. Are you looking for Christ in the right places?