



Come and See!

Week of January 10, 2021

The Word...

It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. And (*immediately upon*) coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." (*And immediately the Spirit cast him out into the wilderness.*)
(from Mk 1:7-11, 12)

Pondering the Word ...

I'm not sure why, but most English translations of Mark's Gospel don't include as many "immediately-s" as are found in the original Greek. There are 41 of them in Mark, compared to 13 in the whole of Matthew's Gospel, 7 in Luke's, and 6 in John's. The word appears to be reserved for healings and other miracles, and yet Mark uses it often to express the way Jesus' ministry unfolds, particularly in the beginning. There is no time for dilly-dallying once the Spirit has cast him into the wilderness and called him to "the purpose for which he had come." (1:38)

Two books I am reading speak of this same sort of urgency: *The Time is Now, A Call to Uncommon Courage*, by Sr. Joan Chittister, and *Let Us Dream*, by Pope Francis and his biographer, Austen Ivereigh. In essence, both books are exhortations to people of goodwill that now is the time to let prophetic voices be heard and bold actions be taken. Now is the time, when we are weary, beaten down by suffering and political strife, to find the courage and creativity to imagine new ways of being emerging from the wilderness of the past year.

For those who believe the spiritual life is a commitment to personal comfort, social security, and public respect, the task of the prophetic is too great, the life of the prophet is too dangerous, the call to prophetic spirituality too much to ask. Still, for those who realize the spiritual life is about following Jesus the Prophet, nothing else is possible. There are those who, like Samuel Johnson, know "great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance." After all, the voice and life of Jesus has been a contradiction to a politicized Christianity from the first. The only difference is that it is our turn now to carry the message. The Time Is Now (p. 82).

Living the Word...

I'm finding it hard to muster the energy to face the immediacy of the now. The holidays provided a hollow, but convenient excuse to hide for a little while, but as we embark on this new year, we are challenged, not to return to normal—remember, "normal" is what got us here -- but to incorporate the essential lessons of these difficult days into our lives. At the end of the year, we spoke about what we have learned. Now it is time to put those lessons into practice for the betterment of all. If you have the courage, you might even ask yourself: "What is the purpose for which God has sent me, for which I have come?"

Personal Reflections and Ideas...

(NOTE: MANY READERS HAVE EXPRESSED THAT THEY ENJOY HAVING "PROVISIONS" EACH DAY AS WE DO IN ADVENT AND LENT, SO STARTING WITH THIS ISSUE OF "COME AND SEE," I WILL ADD THOSE FOR THE WEEKDAYS AS THE SPIRIT LEADS.)

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Mon, Jan 11: *“Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”* (Mk 1:14-20)

Or as the literal translation reads: *“Change your hearts and have faith in the good tidings!”* This is Mark’s version of last week’s reading from Matthew about “metanoia,” the deep, heart-level change to which Christ calls us. The translation is gentler, more of an invitation to our hearts and souls rather than a command to our minds and wills. Having faith in the good tidings is trusting in God’s will for us and in the grace we need to make a real change. **Today’s Provision: Have faith.** The news, at least in my part of the world, is still pretty grim. Let’s commit today to reaffirm our faith in the good news of God’s covenantal love, brought to life in Christ.

Tues, Jan 12: *Jesus came to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.* (Mk 1:21-28)

The Jewish elders got a bad rap from the evangelists, but there were righteous religious leaders in Jesus’ time and ones who abused their power, just as there are today. The scribes were lawyers, and given the complexity of Jewish law, it was no small task to instruct the faithful. The people were used to hearing the scribes tell them what the law says, but Jesus shared with them what the law means. **Today’s Provision: Listen to what Jesus says.** It’s good to go back to the source. Look and listen to Jesus’ words and life— the fulfillment of the law.

Wed, Jan 13: *“Since the children share in blood and Flesh, Jesus likewise shared in them...(to) and free those who through fear of death had been subject to slavery all their life.”* (Heb 2:14-18)

The pandemic has, for better or worse, brought the reality of death into focus. I’ve heard of some preachers saying Christians don’t fear death and that’s the reason we don’t have to wear masks or keep our distance! The author of Hebrews is not suggesting we take foolish risks or endanger ourselves or others; the author is talking about a change of heart to allow the love of Christ to conquer our fears so we can live fully in the light of that love. **Today’s Provision: Confront a fear:** Just one—not all of them! Pick something that causes you anxiety or in some small way enslaves you. Bring it to prayer and ask Jesus to help free you from its grip.

Thurs, Jan 14: *“If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”* (Ps 95)

“We would never harden our hearts! It’s just we don’t really get to hear God’s voice.” Could it be that if our hearts weren’t hard to begin with, maybe we would hear God’s voice! Or maybe we think, “Oh, that couldn’t possibly be God’s voice!” We dismiss the idea from the get-go. **Today’s Provision: Soften your heart.** Not an easy task when sadness tends to harden us which is why it is important right now to allow God to speak to you. Allow pain to touch you and tears to flow. Allow God’s voice to comfort and call you.

Fri, Jan 15: *When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home.* (Mk 2: 1-12)

Jesus is “at home,” probably Peter’s house in Capernaum. I wonder what Peter’s wife and mother-in-law think about the hordes of people showing up at their door (not to mention cutting a hole in the roof)! I wonder if they ever question whether having Jesus in residence is just too much effort? Creating a home for Jesus in our hearts can sometimes be difficult as well. Things may need to be torn down and cleaned up and be in disarray for a while until we have settled in. **Today’s Provision: Make room for Jesus.** Consider something that could be cleared out (e.g., that fear we talked about Wednesday?) to make more room for Jesus to come and heal you and those you welcome. Having Jesus in your heart opens up so much more room for everyone else!

Sat, Jan 16: *Some scribes saw Jesus eating with sinners and tax collectors and said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”* (Mk 2:13-17)

We know Jesus’ response: *“I came to call not the upright, but sinners,”* but I’d guess that Jesus actually preferred the company of everyday folks, the righteous and sinners alike, “the salt of the earth,” those he addressed in the Beatitudes. And he learned from the most unlikely people: the Syrophenician mother who called him forth into his ministry to the Gentiles; the Roman centurion whose faith surpassed that of the Jews. He also spent a lot of time with women; again, not typical of the times, but I’m sure that enriched his already compassionate heart. You know, I think Jesus likes to spend time with those same sorts of people today!

Today’s Provision: Invite Jesus in. Yesterday, you made a little bit more room in your heart, so today, invite Jesus in. Don’t worry about things being in order, or worse, not regal or sophisticated enough for him. Oh, and just so you know – he likes to get comfortable and hang out, so expect him to stay as long as you let him!