



The Word...

“For Zion’s sake I will not be silent,
for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet...”
(from Is 62: 1-5)

There was a wedding at Cana and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited...When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you.”
(from Jn 2:1-11)

Pondering the Word ...

What connects these readings? Two very different scenarios, one common thread: the willingness to speak up.

I am writing this on January 6, the one-year anniversary of the insurrectionists’ attack on the US Capitol. The news is also dominated by the ferocious spread of the COVID Omicron variant. It’s time for the Christmas decorations to be put away, it’s cold and dreary...the winter doldrums have set in! I admit to a lack of energy and enthusiasm; even some apathy has crept in, and I know I’m not alone in how I feel right now.

Then I hear Isaiah’s words: *“I will not be silent. I will not be quiet.”* The prophet will not allow the people to despair or fall back into their sinful, hopeless ways. He will continue to do what prophets do best: speaking up, using their voices to admonish the people, to keep them motivated, not falling into apathy in the face of oppression and difficulty. To bring Zion back from the brink and give people hope for the future.

Then I see Mary at the wedding feast. As always, she is aware of the needs of those around her. She is willing to speak up, albeit quietly, to offer help. (And don’t you just love how she dismisses Jesus’ reluctance; in sales parlance, she goes for the “assumed close,” basically ignoring his objection! Meek and mild, you say?)

The first, a clarion call shouted from the mountain tops to an entire nation. The second, a subtle request to save a host from embarrassment and to keep a party going. While we might be more comfortable doing what Mary does, the willingness to speak up, to help one person in need or to work to get a nation back on track...we are all, each one of us, called to use our voices, our skills, our hands, hearts, and feet to say what needs to be said, to go where we are needed, to do what needs to be done.

Living the Word...

I offer you two very different ideas for reflection and prayer today: First, imagine Mary and Jesus are attending your “feast”-- a day in your life as it is right now. What help does Mary notice that you need? Pray she will intercede for you with her son (and not take no for an answer! 😊) Second, what are the issues in your country, church, or community that press upon you to speak up? Too often, “speaking up” turns into shouting and that solves nothing. Speaking up may mean nonviolent rallying or marching or writing letters advocating for those who have no voice, who are hopeless. How will you use your voice to make a difference right now?

Personal Reflections and Ideas ... _____

Mon, Jan 17: *"No one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined."* (Mk 2:18-22)

This verse makes me think of the "new wine," the "new normal" we have been given to drink these past two years. While we might prefer the old wine in the old wineskins, we need to accept that our lives have changed and new lessons and blessings have been offered to us. If we insist on trying to force the new into the old, much will be lost. **Reflection/Provision:** *Reflect on things you've learned over this time of COVID. Maybe it's not to take things for granted. Perhaps you learned what really matters, what you really value in life; maybe that has taught you some hard lessons on which there is no going back. Journal your thoughts and prayers. Ask the Spirit to enlighten you to incorporate new lessons into a new life going forward.*

Tue, Jan 18: *"The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath."* (Mk 2:23-28)

Have you ever taken a whole 24 hours and done nothing but reflect on God's gifts to you, thanking and praising God for those gifts? I've done a few hours, but that's my limit! I need to get busy doing *something!* Jesus tells us the Sabbath is not about following laws. It is essential to our peace and happiness. The sabbath as God intended it is not an obligation, but a gift, created for us that we might rest in God's embrace.

Reflection/Provision: *How often have you said, "Hurry up, We've got to go to church?" Our choice of words presents it as obligation, not as gift. Spend time reflecting on your image of "sabbath." Think about allowing a little sabbath time each day. Choose one Sabbath day a month to relax with loved ones and reflect together on God's blessings.*

Wed, Jan 19: *"Blessed be the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for battle, my fingers for war....with a ten-stringed lyre I will chant your praise..."* (Ps 144)

I wonder if this psalm is about David's dual roles as Saul's great warrior and the musician selected to calm Saul's nerves! The contrasting images are stark. It's hard to imagine battle-worn fingers able to pluck the delicate strings of the lyre. The key is to know what God is calling you to at any given time: to fight for justice or to gently care for someone in need. **Reflection/Provision:** *This also describes social justice and the need for both political advocacy and charity; both are essential. Most people are more comfortable with the latter, but God calls us to fight injustice as well. Reflect and ask God to help you overcome any resistance you have to working for justice.*

Thu, Jan 20: *"My wanderings you have counted; my tears are stored in your flask."* (Ps 56)

This poetic image of tears being stored in God's flask is not found in any other Scripture passage, but oh, what a beautiful way to describe God's love and compassion! While we may suffer, God is with us as we wander in the wilderness, as we weep for our sorrows and losses. **Reflection/Provision:** *Combining two verses from Scripture, pray: "be still and know that I am Emmanuel, God with you!" Allow God to collect your tears and comfort you.*

Fri, Jan 21: *"Great is the generosity you showed me today, when the LORD delivered me into your grasp and you did not kill me. For if a man meets his enemy, does he send him away unharmed?"* (1 Sm 24:3-21)

The story of David and Saul makes for good reading. Saul, because of his jealousy, sees David as his mortal enemy. In this passage, David, given the opportunity, refuses to harm Saul. The difference: David does not see Saul as his enemy. **Reflection/Provision:** *Is there anyone in your life who sees you as an adversary? Someone who treats you poorly, perhaps out of jealousy? Do you view them the same way and reciprocate? See if you can instead treat those who treat you as "the enemy" with compassion and generosity. "Love your enemies."*

Sat, Jan 22: *"Jesus came with his disciples... Again the crowd gathered... When his relatives heard of this, they set out to seize him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."* (Mk 3:20-21)

Why do you think Jesus' relatives try to "seize" him? To get him out of the fray, like bodyguards do for celebrities? Are they embarrassed by him? Do they think all this attention will turn out badly? Or do they really think he's lost his mind? If someone showed up in your town, doing and saying things like Jesus did and said, what would be your reaction? **Reflection/Provision:** *How often do you "turn the other cheek" or pray for those who persecute you? Do you hang out with those despised by society? Do you not worry about where your next meal will come from? How does "eat my body and drink my blood" sit with you? Really consider the things Jesus says and does. How do you react? More importantly, how do you follow?*