



Come and See!

Week of October 20, 2024

The Word...

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin."

(from Heb 4:14-16)

"Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all.

For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

(from Mk 10:42-45)

Pondering the Word...

(I occasionally recycle something I've written because I think it is still pertinent...in this case, even more so. The following is an edited, abridged version of Come and See from October 21, 2018.)

In 1970, the late Robert K. Greenleaf, published an essay called, "The Servant as Leader." He developed a philosophy of management that the best and most effective leaders are servants first:

"A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the 'top of the pyramid,'...the servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first, and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible" (<https://www.greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/>).

We see examples of servant leadership throughout Scripture—Moses, David, Cyrus, and of course, Jesus, Paul's high priest with "the common touch," the God who came to serve. No, it's not a new idea, but one that needs to be promoted in this age of authoritarian leadership and hostile, partisan government.

In his book, *A Failure of Nerve*, the late Dr. Edwin Friedman, defines the concept of a well-differentiated leader:

"Someone who has clarity about his or her own life goals, and, therefore, someone who is less likely to become lost in the anxious emotional processes swirling about...someone who can be separate while still remaining connected, and can maintain a modifying, non-anxious, and sometimes challenging presence...someone who can manage his or her own reactivity to the automatic reactivity of others, and therefore be able to take stands at the risk of displeasing" (1999, p. 13).

Isn't this exactly the kind of leader Jesus was? Isn't this what we should all strive for as parents, ministers, teachers, committee leaders, politicians, and business leaders?

Living the Word...

How can you be a servant leader? Jesus is a model for us, not only as a compassionate, prayerful healer, but as a leader. As a parent, try to be a non-anxious presence (a NAP!) for your child; as a manager, put the needs of employees first; as a priest or minister, avoid clericalism; as a politician, quell the quest for power and serve the people. Jesus' life that we strive to model is not just about feeding the poor, healing the sick, and spending time in contemplation. It is about how we approach every aspect of our lives.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Mon, Oct 21: *"Now you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!"* But God said, *'You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you'* (Lk 12:13-21). The Spirit threw me a curve ball on this reading. I often find myself lamenting about how infrequently I allow time for quiet prayer. I make these vague commitments: "Next week, I'll be better about praying. "Next month, I'll allot time every day in my schedule." Sound familiar? While we know this parable is about stockpiling material things rather than things that matter to God, the Spirit nudged me and asked, "What are you 'stockpiling' with your infernal "to do" lists? Do you think your busyness matters to God?" **Provision: "Come away and rest awhile."** Most of my busyness has nothing to do with resting, eating, drinking, or being merry, but that doesn't mean it is all "holy work." There's an expression in Buddhism, "The awakened one is the one with nothing left to do." Let's challenge ourselves today to put aside worries and anxieties and "choose the better part" by sitting at the Lord's feet to listen. *"It is morning, afternoon, or evening. Begin"* (Thomas Merton).

Tue, Oct 22: *"Let me hear what the Lord God would speak when God speaks peace to the people"* (Ps 85, Hebrew translation). The NAB translation: *"The Lord speaks peace to the people."* I'm sure God does. In fact, I imagine God sometimes abandons the "small, still voice" and shouts at us trying to get us to listen! **Provision: Pray for the grace to hear God's words of peace.** This has been tough for me. So much bad news. So much conflict, violence, and destruction. It's hard to muster up the strength and faith to turn our ears to hear God's words of peace amid the noise. But let's give it a try. Take time today in the quiet to listen for peace.

Wed, Oct 23: *"You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation"* (Is 12: 2-3, 4, 5-6). Of course, you'll be joyful when you draw salvation from your faith! That is, unless you're depressed. Then you know it's nearly impossible to be joyful. You know the hurt when others tell you to find hope and joy in your relationship with God. If it were only that simple. At times, you don't even try to draw water; it's easier to remain in the dry darkness. **Provision: Seek help. Please.** As one who's been there, I'm confident God is with you, and I pray you will experience God's presence too. We can find God's presence in another, trained to guide us, to help us look for the tiniest trickle from the spring. Get help from a trained minister or counselor. Seek out a licensed pastoral counselor who can marry your faith with sound counseling techniques. Don't go it alone. Reach out.

Thu, Oct 24: *"Do you think I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division"* (Lk 12:49-53). There are people in the US who use this passage, among others, to justify violence in the name of Christian nationalism. They point to Matthew's version (10:34): *"I have come to bring not peace but the sword."* Please note: it is not Jesus wielding the sword! Jesus knows humanity all too well (Jn 2:24). He knows his message of peace, of loving your enemy will drive control-bound, hell-bent human beings to use force to impose their warped version of Christianity on others. The incendiary language and actions prevalent today are the weapons being wielded. True Christians stand for peace in the face of violence. **Provision: Be "heaven-bent." Stand for peace.**

Fri, Oct 25: *"Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?"* (Lk 12:54-59). The quotes I've chosen for today and tomorrow speak of an important topic: mature faith. To be mature in our faith means we discern for ourselves what is just, based not only on the teachings of our practice, but on our own conscience in light of objective universal truths. An informed conscience is not one that decides what is right or wrong based on its own desires and needs, but one that grows and matures through prayer and reflection. **Provision: How will you grow your faith today?** Topics of truth and the Spirit and faith get pretty complex. Some just prefer to have a checkbox approach, to do what they are told by their faith leaders. This can be risky as we know. This question is so overused, but it is still a good one: "What would Jesus do?" Would Jesus turn anyone away from the table? Would Jesus identify foreigners as evil? Would Jesus not show mercy?

Sat, Oct 26: *"Until we attain...mature faith, that we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery"* (Eph 4:7-16). Tossed by the waves of social media, disinformation (aka, lies), using Jesus to promote hatred: is this what God wants?! **Provision: Find your anchor.** God gave us good brains and Divine wisdom in the Spirit to judge for our souls (not for our lives or wallets) what is right. If you are being tossed about, drop anchor. Find the shore. Ground yourself in Christ's message of Love.