



Come and See!

Week of November 3, 2024

The Word...

One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him,
"Which is the first of all the commandments?"

Jesus replied, "The first is this:

*Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone!
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*

The second is this: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

There is no other commandment greater than these"

(Mk 12:28b-34).

Pondering the Word...

This is election week in the US. I realize not all who read this are in the States, but many are, so I begin with the wisdom of Julian of Norwich, which can be a comfort to us all: *"All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."* It may seem hard to believe this right now, but if we are true to faith, we trust in God's plan, even when things appear to be in shambles or don't turn out the way we hoped.

Let's consider this discussion Jesus has with the scribe, the interpreter of the law. The operative word in this exchange is love: Love God. Love your neighbor. Love yourself. Love God above all else: more than family, more than money or status, more than country or political party or candidate. Love your neighbor: this doesn't mean you want them to want and accept the same things you want. It means loving and respecting the dignity of the other in their uniqueness as a child of God. It means their right to life, liberty, and individual freedom is just as important and sacred as yours. Love yourself: do not allow hate to poison you. Hate burns us. Hate pulls us further and further away from the Kingdom of God.

Living the Word...

I imagine (I hope) there are people reading this that fall on both sides of the US political aisle, and that they will vote their informed conscience, based on the commandment of love God has given us. I also believe that anyone reading this cannot be a person who harbors hate in their hearts. But in the coming weeks and months, I am fearful that hate threatens to take center stage, regardless of the election outcome. Retribution, revenge, and revolt are waiting in the wings. Let us all pray fervently for peace and do what we can in our own families and communities to, as Paul tells us this week, "be united in heart" and "shine like lights in the world."

We ask God's blessings and protection on all those running for office, for poll workers and election judges, and for all who are courageous enough to vote with their hearts full of love and their consciences clear, despite fear, opposition, and threats. May we recognize that we cast our votes, based not on ourselves and our own desires, but for all of God's creation, so the world can come closer to the Kingdom of God.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Mon, Nov 4: *"Like a weaned child on its mother's lap, so is my soul within me"* (Ps 131). *"When you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind"* (Lk 14:12-14). I love this psalm verse. It invokes such peace and comfort. A child is my soul, not clinging or needy, just secure, quiet, resting in the love of God. I've used the verse from Luke to get us to think about the people in our lives who need this kind of comfort: those crippled by loneliness, depression, blind to their worth as children of God. **Provision: Comfort those who are alone.** We will soon enter the season of "banquets," gatherings of families and friends. Be aware of those within your own community who are alone or suffering. If appropriate, include them in the festivities. (For some who suffer, this might be more painful, so use discretion. Let them decide but reach out nonetheless.)

Tue, Nov 5: *"Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus"* (Phil 2:5-11). I share this again as I have on election days in the past:

*"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by You into ever-widening thought and action —
Into that haven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake"
(Let My Country Awake, Rabindranath Tagore, 1861-1941).*

Wed, Nov 6: *"Whoever does not carry their own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple"* (Lk 14:25-33). People ask me why Jesus refers to carrying our cross when "The Cross" (the Christian symbol) came years after his death. (Go to <https://theologyandthecity.com/2018/03/27/jesus-and-the-cross-how-the-cross-became-christianitys-most-popular-symbol/> for a scholarly explanation.) The word "cross," in both Greek and Aramaic means a post or stake associated with suffering; in metaphoric terms, a curse. Here's what comes to my heart when I pray with this verse: Jesus wants us to accept ourselves as we are. We all come with our own cross. For some, it is literal illness, suffering, or loss; for others, sinful tendencies that haunt them; still others, inordinate attachments, doubt, or the sins of their pasts. **Provision: "Come after me" as you are.** I've had all kinds of excuses, like the would-be disciples in Luke 9, as if I needed to clean up my spiritual house or get my "to dos" done before I invite Jesus in. While you may think these words from Jesus seem harsh, see if you can look at them instead as an invitation to you to follow him, bringing along all that baggage you carry.

Thu, Nov 7: *"What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it?"* (Lk 15:1-10). I hate to say it, but there are lots of people who would write the lost one off, no questions asked: expected loss, the cost of doing business. Let us give thanks this is not the practice of our merciful God! **Provision: Take comfort today.** In keeping with the theme of comfort, find solace in this promise of being found. *"God didn't give up on you when you were lost, and God will certainly not give up on you now that you are God's"* (Roy Lessin, adapted).

Fri, Nov 8: *"Their end is destruction, their God is their stomach... Their minds are occupied with earthly things"* (Phil 3:17-4:1). "Thanks, Paul, for the subtle reminder, just in time for the "season of banquets" we talked about Monday!" **Provision: What's occupying your mind?** The slippery slope to the holiday season has begun. As I write this, I have no idea what might be happening due to the election. Whatever worldly things are occupying your mind today, take a break. Sit quietly in prayer. *"Stand firm in the Lord, beloved."* All will be well.

Sat, Nov 9: *The angel brought me to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water flowing out from beneath the threshold ... Wherever the river flows, every sort of living creature that can multiply shall live* (Ez 47:1-2, 8-9, 12). *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* (1 Cor 3: 9-11, 16-17). **Provision: Check your water supply!** We are temples, and from us the Spirit of God can flow and give life to every sort of living creature. But to make sure our water is fresh and nourishing, we need to continually allow the wellspring, the source of compassion within, to nourish us. Don't let the flow dry up or become stagnant. Allow yourself to be bathed today in the comforting waters of the Spirit!