



Come and See!

Week of November 13, 2022

The Word ...

“Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven,
when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble,
and the day that is coming will set them on fire,
leaving them neither root nor branch, says the LORD of hosts.
But for you who fear my name, there will arise
the sun of justice with its healing rays.
(Mal 3:19-20a)

Pondering the Word ...

Tell me...have you started preparing to prepare? Do you have the lists started? Who do I need gifts for? What ingredients do I need for the cookies and the holiday meals? When will we put up the decorations? When do I need to get all the junk out of the guestrooms in order to make room for guests? (Maybe that's just me!) Oh, there are so many things to distract me from preparing for the real preparation I am to make.

The readings these last two weeks before Advent can feel like a slap in the face, and that's exactly what they are meant to be. They shake us out of our pre-Christmas frenzy; they stop us in our tracks and make us reflect on the extraordinary event we are supposed to be preparing for: Emmanuel, God with us, God becoming one of us.

In their essence, the readings today and up until Advent are about one thing: faith. Faith in God's covenant, faith in God's Word, despite all that is happening that can challenge our faith; a time when the proud and the evildoers seem to prevail with impunity. A time when many come in Jesus' name but preach hate. A time of war, climate disasters, starvation, and plagues. A time when the way of the wicked does not vanish but seems to flourish. A time when we may *“shed many tears because no one is found worthy...”*.

But the Lord promises us that a sun of healing justice will arise, and through our perseverance, we will be secure. The one who has faith will never be disturbed. Have faith.

Living the Word ...

Take time to read the entirety of Malachi's chapter three. It's not long and it's a bit apocalyptic, but there is much to reflect upon given the current state of affairs in our world (verses 5-6, 13-18 are of particular value). In fact, commit to spend extra time with all the readings this week, particularly those from Revelations, written to the churches in Asia. Again, there is a lot that is applicable to our situation right now.

Today, reflect on how you will “prepare to prepare.” What will you do during these next two weeks to be ready for Advent, a time of reflection and hope? Do you, like me, have “junk” like anger and jadedness to clear out of your soul so you can make it a comfortable, hope- and faith-filled place for the most important guest of all?

Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

Mon, Nov 14: *Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Lk 18:35-43)* **Reflection/Provision:** Using your imagination, put yourself in this scene, but with a twist this time: Instead of imagining you are the blind beggar of whom Jesus asks the question, imagine instead you are walking by and see Jesus on the side of the road. Ask Jesus, "What do you want ME to do for YOU?" Having trouble imagining Jesus begging on the side of the road? Interesting. That's exactly where he said we would find him.

Tue, Nov 15: *To the angel of the Church in Sardis:... "I know your works, that you have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.... To the angel of the Church in Laodicea:... "I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. Because you are lukewarm...I will spit you out of my mouth" (Rv 3:1-6, 14-22).*

Revelations, chapters 2 and 3 are the messages to the seven Churches of Asia. They are pretty similar, praising the churches for their perseverance, exhorting those who are being persecuted to endure, but also pointing out areas of concern: those who do good out of obligation and not out of love and joy; those who straddle the fence, afraid of risking their material wealth; those who do not speak against false teachers in their midst. **Reflection/Provision:** As you read these admonitions (read both chapters if you can), make them real: What would God say to our faith communities? Yes, God speaks of looking into the hearts of individuals and that there are those who will be saved, but reflect on what it means for the community? Can you see how individual salvation is tied directly to communal salvation?

Wed, Nov 16: *The four living creatures, each of them with six wings, were covered with eyes inside and out. Day and night they do not stop exclaiming: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty" (Rv 4:1-11).* **Reflection/Provision:** I don't know about you, but when I read Revelations, the whole thing sounds creepy and very tiring! Day and night, they are praying! ("Pray without ceasing," says Paul, 1 Thes 5:17.) Hanging around those who are scary to look at! (The leper, the homeless, the prisoner, the naked, and all those other "living creatures" in whom Jesus says we will find him.) Revelation is here. Salvation is now. How do you, how will you live it?

Thu, Nov 17: *"If this day you only knew what makes for peace" (Lk 19: 41-44).* **Reflection/Provision:** I write this a few days before an election in the US, and I pray that as a country, as a world, we can learn what makes for peace: respectful discourse; the acceptance of "those from every tribe and tongue, people and nation" (from Revelations today) as God's children; the equitable sharing of material goods; justice and compassion; acceptance of differences; truth; love. I am aghast at "how far we have fallen" (Rv 2: 5) from "the time of our visitation." Let us pray that we can finally learn what makes for peace. Do everything you can in any situation in which you find yourself to foster peace. For our sake; for the earth's sake; for God's sake.

Fri, Nov 18: *"Take and swallow [the scroll]. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth, it will taste as sweet as honey, ... You must prophesy again." (Rv 10:8-11).* **Reflection/Provision:** At the risk of making this reflection too personal, I am compelled to share how this moves me today: God's word is always sweet to me, even the tough stuff. As dramatic as it sounds, I know what the psalmist means: "I gasp with open mouth in my yearning for your commands." Yet it can quickly go sour on me as I observe my own violations of God's commands, especially in response to what I see happening around me. Skepticism and jadedness have taken hold of me. And yet I am—as we all are—called to prophesy again, that God's promise will not be denied. We are called to speak of hope and faith. This is my challenge in preparing for Christ's coming. What is your challenge? How are you called?

Sat, Nov 19: *"Blessed be the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for battle, my fingers for war. My mercy and my fortress, my stronghold, my deliverer, my shield, in whom I trust" (Ps 144).* **Reflection/Provision:** An apt bookend. This psalm reflects the faith those who work for the Kingdom *must* have before engaging in whatever "battle" we are waging—which is often with ourselves. We battle our doubts and anxieties, our shortcomings and unworthiness, our lack of faith. We struggle to understand how to live our faith. It's ironic that in order to battle our lack of faith, we need faith. We need to believe the words used most often in Scripture: "Be not afraid." "Don't worry about your lack of faith. I will train you. Don't worry about your shortcomings and lack of understanding. I am your mercy. I will protect you and deliver you into my embrace. Trust me." You believe IN God; you have faith IN God, but ask yourself: Do I believe the words God says to me? Do I trust God?