



Come and See!

November 18, 2018

The Word...

"In those days after that tribulation the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from the sky,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken....
But of that day or hour, no one knows,
neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."
(from Mk 13: 24-32)

Pondering the Word...

A reminder that we are approaching the end of the liturgical year, so just when we could use a good shot in the arm, some encouraging, uplifting words...we get to hear all about the end of the world. For some of our brothers and sisters who have recently faced horrific floods and fires, these frightening words are all too real.

(We pause for a few minutes to offer prayers for those who have lost their lives, their families, and all they own in the recent natural disasters, and for those who have lost loved ones to violence and hate through mass shootings and genocide.)

No, we cannot and will not know the day or the hour, but we do know this: Salvation is not some far-off goal to be reached after we die. Salvation is the living, breathing, day-to-day witness to the presence of Christ within ourselves and within one another. It is the wise who recognize this truth and strive to live, not as if each moment was their last, but as if each moment is a gift. Because it is.

"Each day comes bearing its own gifts. Untie the ribbons." (Mary Oliver)

Living the Word...

"But the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever." (Dn 12:1-3) Today's Old Testament reading from the Book of Daniel ends with these hopeful words; meaningful words for those who would lead others, particularly children and young people, on the path of justice. As we age, bitterness can creep into our language, our attitudes, and our lives. But bitterness is never the mark of a Christian. Hope and joy rooted in the reality of salvation in the here and now is what sets us apart. Not anger, not vitriol, not forcing others to believe what we believe. Never hatred.

If we wish to shine in the firmament like stars forever, let's make sure our light shines brightly today. Pay attention to what your words and actions say to others. Do they speak of hope and encouragement? Do they foster opportunity for growth, a belief in the prospect for change? Think about picking up a package of bright adhesive stars and putting a few around in strategic locations—like on your cell phone or computer or wherever you read the news—as a not-so-subtle way to remind yourself: Today, I will let my light shine!

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Nov 19: *Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?"* (Lk 18:35-43)

When you peruse the gospels, make note of the times Jesus asks a question like the one he asks the blind man today. Some in the crowd may think, 'Why does he need to ask? The guy is blind. What else would he want?' Jesus does not assume. He respects the dignity of each person, allowing them to express their true need. What if this man had said, 'I want you to heal my brother,' or 'Come, bless my mother'? How might those in the crowd feel now? When we do charitable work, we might assume we know what the people we serve need or we might think we know better; or, worse yet, we might think, 'Beggars can't be choosers.' Don't assume to know. If the situation allows, ask, "What can I do for you today?" You might be surprised to hear the answer.

Nov 20: *At that time Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town... Jesus looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house."* (Lk 19:1-10)

Jesus has his sights set on Jerusalem, about 15 rugged, mountainous miles from Jericho. He is on his way, intending to keep to his journey when he spies a small man hidden in a big tree a few yards ahead. He stops and says, 'I'm staying at this guy's house today.' By now, his disciples are probably used to this, but maybe they've already sent people ahead to procure lodging for the night. And wouldn't you know it--no cell phones to let them know the change in plans! So often I find myself in such a hurry to get somewhere, I wonder: who, or what need, have I missed along the way? A friend who spent 25 years ministering in Nigeria tells me Nigerians are often late, not because they are rude, but that they know the importance of greeting others they encounter. Jesus' ministry is one of awareness of the need around him. See if you can be that aware today.

Nov 21: *"Then the other servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your gold coin; I kept it stored away in a handkerchief, for I was afraid of you...'"* (Lk 19:11-18)

Can you imagine how nervous this third servant must be? He's got a gold coin wrapped up in his pocket and probably checks it night and day. Perhaps the others are nervous too, but at least they can say they tried. Remember, the master does not put stipulations on the rate of return—he just says, 'engage in trade.' But this third guy is so afraid of failing, he doesn't heed the words of hockey great Wayne Gretsky's coach: "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." Each night, Jesus does not ask me how many souls I saved today or how many hungry mouths I fed or how many refugees I sheltered? Jesus wants to know: 'Did you try? And do you have faith that God will return a hundredfold the gifts you have used today to further the Kingdom?'

Nov 22: *"If this day you only knew what makes for peace."* (Lk 19: 41-44)

These words are in the lectionary every year, and every year, I am led to pray over them. And every year, I seem to hear the same thing: the path towards peace seems more and more distant. But I am also reminded of the words of the song: "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me." If I am not at peace first within myself and with my God, I cannot be at peace with family and friends, much less those with whom I disagree. Today is Thanksgiving in the US. As we give thanks for our blessings even amid trying times, let us also pray for ourselves and one another. Let us pray that each be granted the essential peace with the Spirit within, the Spirit that is the wellspring of all peace. Then, let us take that peace and share it with the world!

Nov 23: *(The angel) said to me, "Take and swallow (the scroll). It will turn your stomach sour."* (Rv 10:8-11)

I guess you don't debate with an angel, but how many of us would be happy about swallowing something that makes us sick? The initial sweetness of God's promise is enough to give one the strength to endure the suffering that precedes its fulfillment, but John is told, "You must prophesy again." Perhaps it gets so tiring, so disheartening as to make one ill at the thought of repeating the same warnings over and over, but such is the work of the Kingdom. When you find yourself wearying, remember the sweetness of God's promise.

Nov 24: *"When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the abyss will... kill them. (Rv 11:4-12) "...he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."* (Lk 20:27-40)

A good bookend for the week. Yes, we may be frightened by stories of end times, beasts, and death, but in about a month, we will celebrate "Emmanuel, God with us"...the living God who came to bring life to all. (That realization—one month--was a little scary for me! ☺ Let's make sure we don't get so busy we forget what the upcoming days of preparation are all about!)