



Come and See!

November 25, 2018

The Word...

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness,
the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth.
To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,
who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father,
to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Behold, he is coming amid the clouds,
and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him.
All the peoples of the earth will lament him. Yes. Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God,
"the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty."

(Rv 1:5-8)

Pondering the Word...

John structures these first verses of Revelations carefully, communicating to us a present, past, and future of hope, despite the frightening images he paints in most of this book. Present: Christ *is* the faithful witness, the ruler who *loves* us as we are, right now. Past: By his sacrifice he *freed* us from sin and *called us* to be priests—*"hiereis,"* derived from the Greek, *"hierón,"* which means "the sacred" —of God's kingdom. Future: behold, he *will come again*, when all will look upon him, even those who deny or betray or ignore him, and all will give witness to his majesty. Revelations scholars posit that, by saying "all will lament him," John is prophesying that all nations will be received with mercy into the Kingdom.

While many of the readings this week issue dire warnings, and we find ourselves inundated with sad news of natural disasters and violence, let us never lose our foundation of hope: *"I am the one who is and who was and who is to come."* Hope, as we go into the blessed season of anticipation of Christ's birth; hope, as we live every day amid the joys and challenges the Kingdom has in store.

Living the Word...

I am going to try this coming week to "prepare to be prepared to be amazed." Every year, Advent seems to surprise me and despite my best intentions, my preparations for the Incarnation have more to do with the house and tree and gifts being just so, rather than readying a soft, warm place for the Christ Child. Advent used to be a time, similar to Lent, when Christians would fast and pray. Think of something you can fast from in order to soften your heart: 24/7 access to the news (i.e., take the cell phone and iPad out of the bedroom; turn off the TV or radio); consumer overload (how many presents do the kids really need?); sugar intake (don't worry—you'll catch up on Christmas Day!). Maybe it's fasting from impatience or pettiness or skepticism. If you are not a regular pray-er, devote some time to quiet meditative prayer like the Rosary or Lectio Divina. Whatever it is, it should be a reminder to consciously open and prepare a warm place in your heart.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

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(Next week, we begin "Provisions for the Journey to Bethlehem" for Advent and Christmas week. "Come and See" will resume in January.)

Nov 26: *"They were singing what seemed to be a new hymn before the throne..."* (Rv 14:1-5)

So the chosen are singing "a new song unto the Lord," just like the psalmist instructed. I'm glad they paid attention! I wonder if God gets tired of "The Same Old Song" I sing? You know, I don't think so. I think God loves to hear us sing, no matter how off-key or repetitious we are. But just for fun, think about singing God a new song today. If your repertoire is always a lot of "special requests," how about singing God an intimate love song? If your songs tend to be of the dirge or "emo" genres, try a rousing rendition of the "Halleluiahs Chorus" or "Go Tell it on the Mountain?" Think about the lyrics of a favorite song (be reasonable here!) and sing it to God. If nothing else, the two of you can have a good laugh. God loves that too!

Nov 27: *While some people were speaking about how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings, Jesus said, "All that you see here—the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone." (Lk 21:5-11)* Jesus is warning of the fall of Jerusalem and its elaborate temple, which does occur in 70 AD. In Revelations, John's warnings have to do with the fall of Rome, which happened, although not in the dramatic fashion John predicts. Rome's downfall was precipitated by rot from within the empire. Nations and great centers of worship have come and gone over the millennia, and will continue to do so as long as humanity remains. Some suggest we are witnessing a fall in the US and in the Church even now. And yes, the earth and heavens have experienced great natural disasters and awesome sights and will do so as long as they exist. Keep in mind the wise advice in Psalm 146: *"Put no trust in princes, in children of Adam powerless to save, who breathing his last, returns to the earth; that day all his planning comes to nothing. Blessed the one whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD, his God...who keeps faith forever."*

Nov 28: *"All the nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."* (Rv 15:1-4) And just how will God's righteous acts be revealed? Just how will the Lord let his salvation be known? How will the world see his justice and fairness? We are called each day to be Christ's face, words, hands, and feet in the world. Soon, we will hear Mary asked to bear Christ. How is God asking you to bear Christ today?

Nov 29: *"Because your merchants were the great ones of the world, all nations were led astray by your magic potion."* (Rv 18:1-2, 21-23; 19:1-3, 9)

John is channeling Jeremiah as he equates the fall of Rome with the fall of Babylon. The words are disconcerting as we are already in the midst of the onslaught of the great merchants in this season of excess. It is easy to be led astray by "magic potions" purported to make us more attractive or intelligent or wealthy; tempting to be intimidated by vague warnings about being left behind or not being seen as up on the latest trend or fashion. Consider this when the pressure to purchase gets to be too much: Do I need this "potion," this gadget, this item? What do I really need to enter into "the wedding feast of the Lamb?" (v. 9)

Nov 30: *Jesus saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."* (Mt 4:18-22)

In the several Christian traditions, today is St. Andrew's Day. In the stories of the calling of the first Apostles, four of them are mentioned: Simon-Peter, Andrew, James, and John. But in subsequent gospels stories, Andrew seems to take a back seat. It is Peter, James, and John that witness the Transfiguration; they also accompany Jesus into the garden at Gethsemane. In John's Gospel, it is Andrew that leads his brother Simon to Jesus, who christens Simon with his new name. We learn from early Christian texts that he preached in Greece and was martyred there c. 60 AD. Not many of us are called to be the stars or the leaders. Instead, like Andrew, we play supporting roles, or are behind the scenes, or perhaps lead others to God. Be joyful in whatever role God has planned for you. You are just as blessed!

Dec 1: *"Nothing accursed will be found anymore...his servants will look upon his face. Night will be no more...for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever and ever."* (Rv 22:1-7)

"For Christians, hope is ultimately hope in Christ. The hope that he really is what for centuries we have been claiming he is. The hope that despite the fact that sin and death still rule the world, he somehow conquered them. The hope that in him and through him all of us stand a chance of somehow conquering them too. The hope that at some unforeseeable time and in some unimaginable way he will return with healing in his wings." (Frederick Buechner, from *Beyond Words*)