



# Come and See!

February 24, 2019

## The Word...

Abishai whispered to David:  
“God has delivered your enemy into your grasp this day....  
But David said to Abishai, “Do not harm him,  
for who can lay hands on the LORD’s anointed and remain unpunished?”  
*(from 1 Sm 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23)*

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.  
*(from Lk 6:27-38)*

## Pondering the Word...

What is mercy?

As I reflected on the Old Testament passage, I thought about the mercy David shows Saul, the same mercy he granted him a few chapters earlier. The more I reflected, the more I questioned: Is it mercy David shows? Or is it really just concern about the risk of punishment if he harms “the Lord’s anointed?” David shows little mercy for some others he encounters as the story of his life unfolds.

The world would be a better place if people showed mercy, even if it was for self-centered reasons, just as it would be if people were charitable in hopes of heavenly reward. But Jesus tells us, “Be merciful as your Father is merciful.” How do we do that? God doesn’t gain anything from showing us mercy. God’s very nature is Love, so there’s nothing else he can do. God just loves us...that is what we are called to as well...just love.

Mercy is forgiveness, but at a deeper level. It is what Jesus speaks about in today’s gospel. It is a willingness to be vulnerable, to put aside bitterness and retribution, and in some cases, our better judgment. Mercy doesn’t mean being a doormat or enduring abuse. It accepts sin as part of the human experience but releases both the victim and the perpetrator from the weight that sin imposes.

Is there a call for love and real mercy in your life?

## Living the Word...

Have you ever experienced granting or receiving real, true mercy? It is humbling to receive mercy. Many of us don’t want mercy with no strings attached. We don’t want to be in someone’s debt, and that is likely why, when it comes to granting mercy, we “do to others as we would have them do to us.” We have a hard time granting mercy, too. It can also be why accepting God’s mercy is difficult and why some go to extreme lengths to mortify themselves instead of simply and humbly accepting God’s love.

It is also humbling--and incredibly freeing--to grant mercy. There is no pride or power attached; it is not granted because “I can.” Real mercy comes from a deep well of compassion fed by our constant acceptance of God’s mercy for us. Look around your life today. Are there places of pain that would benefit from love? Allow yourself to receive mercy and grant mercy. Experience the difference it can make in your life.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

**Feb 25:** *“To whom has wisdom’s root been revealed? Who knows her subtleties? To whom has the discipline of wisdom been revealed? And who has understood the multiplicity of her ways?”* (Sir 1:1-10)

This passage from Book of Sirach (sometimes called Ben Sira) strikes me as in keeping with Pope Francis’ focus on pastoral care. Pastoral care is not about hard and fast rules. There are subtleties, a multiplicity of ways those who are wise can employ when giving care to the wounded or neglected members of the flock. Jesus knew the law and could recite it word for word. But more importantly, he was gifted with the Spirit’s wisdom to reach out with compassion to those the law rejected. We too are called to be wise. How will you reach out today to someone who has been left behind? *“Knowledge is proud that it knows so much. Wisdom is humble that it knows no more.”* (William Cowper) (Note: Sirach is found in the Apocrypha of most Protestant Bibles. It is not found in the Hebrew Masoretic Text but some of its wisdom appears in other canonical books in the Old Testament.)

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**Feb 26:** *He ask(ed) them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they remained silent. For they had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest.* (Mk 9:30-37)

Some of the Apostles—probably James and John (the “sons of thunder”) and maybe Peter and Andrew— are walking behind Jesus bickering about who is the best disciple. I see Nathaniel — the one in whom Jesus saw no guile— rolling his eyes. Then Jesus asks them to ‘share with the rest of the class’ what they were arguing about! Those involved are shamed into silence. Jesus instructs them gently: being first, being the best, even if it is being the best disciple, is a human goal, a desire of the false self. If we do good only out of obligation, to gain heaven, or to outshine the competition; if our humbleness and humility are a source of pride, then our intent is still self-centered. St. Francis of Assisi once said, *“Above all the grace and gifts that Christ gives to his beloved is that of overcoming self.”* Is there any part of your ‘self’ you might need to overcome today?

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**Feb 27:** *John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us.”* (Mk 9:38-40)

Whoever this guy is, he is not part of “the group.” ‘Who does he think he is, invoking Jesus’ name and driving out demons?’ Jesus makes it clear to John: if he is healing in my name, his belief is sincere. Don’t stop him. Something to consider if we think one must be from this or that denomination in order to speak for Christ. If real good is being done for all of God’s children and for creation in Christ’s name, let us all celebrate!

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**Feb 28:** *“Of forgiveness be not overconfident, adding sin upon sin. Say not: “Great is his mercy; my many sins he will forgive.” ...Delay not your conversion to the LORD, put it not off from day to day.* (Sir 5:1-8)

Hmmh...so how do we feel about this passage? God’s mercy is great, and yes, our many sins he will forgive if we but turn to him in sincere sorrow with a heart intent on improving, even when we fail again. Our conversion to the Lord is in our hands. It is something we can achieve each minute of each day, no matter where we stand right now. We *can* be confident in God’s forgiveness, waiting for us to return.

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**Mar 1:** *“Let your acquaintances be many, but one in a thousand your confidante.”* (Sir 6:5-17)

There’s a book I recommend to kids going off to college (and their parents) called, *The Freshman Survival Guide*. My favorite chapter is entitled, “Be Generous with Your Friendship but Stingy with your Trust.” Good advice, like the advice we read today. It’s also why our relationship with God is so important: if it is based on trust and love, we’ll always have a confidante, someone to turn to in difficult times. This is important for all of us, but particularly for young people as they venture out into the world. Encourage your children to keep the lines of communication open with God, the one who will always be there for them.

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**Mar 2:** *“ He created for them counsel, and a tongue and eyes and ears, and an inventive heart...He has set before them knowledge, a law of life as their inheritance.* (Sir 17:1-15)

The message today has bearing on debates that arise between scientific progress and religion. Ben Sira acknowledges the goodness of the intellectual and inventive gifts God has given humankind, but the final phrase provides the context: our great inheritance from God is the law of life. Our knowledge, inventions, and wisdom are to respect for the law of life under which we exist. As we examine issues such as bioethics, the sanctity of life, and social reform, remember the wisdom of Ben Sira. And remember, this law applies to all life. What is good for all of creation—not just humanity or my country or myself-- is the law of life.