



Come and See!

Easter Sunday, 2019

The Word...

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
(from Ps 118)

On the first day of the week,
Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning,
while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb....
Then the other disciple went in...He saw and believed.
(from Jn 20:1-9)

Pondering the Word...

"Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house...acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Pt 2:4-5)

Stones have figured prominently in the gospels over the past several weeks: The devil tempting Jesus to turn stones into bread after 40 days in the desert. The elders ready to stone the woman caught in adultery. The rejected stone that becomes the cornerstone. The stones that would cry out if Jesus silenced his disciples. The stone that secured his tomb.

Stones are important in the Old Testament as well. Jacob rests his head on a stone, dreams of a ladder to heaven, and builds an altar to God. Moses carves the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. David defeats the enemy with five smooth stones and God-guided aim. God changes hearts of stone.

A quick search yields over 400 uses of the word stone in the Bible. Stones used to build up, stones used to break down. Stones used to defend against death, stones used to consign one to the grave. The old covenant etched in stone, the new covenant written, not on stone, but on hearts made for love.

Living the Word...

In this time of turmoil when it feels like the foundations of many of our institutions are cracking and crumbling, it is imperative, it is essential that we the people come together as living stones to rebuild a house acceptable to God. Decorative cornerstones are used these days more for commemoration, but we cannot allow our cornerstone—Christ Jesus—to become anything less than the bedrock on which we stand. We are not called to commemorate his life. We are called to live it. Jesus was rejected because he dared to ask the hard questions, to challenge the status quo. We too, chosen and precious in the sight of God, must be willing, as living stones, to question and challenge, to cry out and not allow fear and apathy to silence us.

Like Mary of Magdala, we may still be in the dark. But look! The stone has been removed from the tomb. Let us have the courage to go inside our hearts, to see, and to believe. He lives!

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Apr 22: Peter stood up, raised his voice, and proclaimed: “You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words...” (Acts 2: 14, 22-33)

If you’ve ever been in an airport you know there’s a seemingly unending stream of announcements over the PA system. You’re called to attention, you hear it’s about some other flight so you tune out; you don’t listen to the rest of the message. I have nearly missed flights that way. The main audience for Peter’s message today is the Jews, but he decides to call to everyone within earshot. It will be eight more chapters before God sends him to baptize the gentile, Cornelius, but the Spirit prompts him to address the whole crowd--Jews, Romans, foreigners, centurions, slaves, scribes, the poor. I imagine some tuned him out: “Oh, this information is not meant for me,” or “I don’t agree with him so I’m not going to pay attention.” We might be surprised that we can learn things, and even receive God’s call, from unlikely sources. In these days of constant distraction, we need to pick and choose what we listen to. Let’s just make sure to step outside our ‘echo chambers’ to listen for God’s message where we might least expect to hear it.

Apr 23: Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” She thought it was the gardener and said to him, “Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him.” (Jn 20:11-18)

Jewish law is very strict about death rituals and the impurity one incurs if they come in contact with a dead body or even a grave. This obviously didn’t matter to Mary but that’s no surprise. She stood beneath his bleeding body on the cross; she ventured out in the dark alone to go to the tomb and grieve. Now she tells the ‘gardener,’ “tell me where you laid him and I will take him.” Think about that. She is willing to take his body, already entombed for 24 hours, in her arms. I think about the times I have been unwilling to encounter Christ in the poor or suffering, the times I have turned away afraid to touch the unwashed or unwanted. Mary didn’t worry about all that stuff. She didn’t run, but put aside her fears in favor of love. Let us pray for the grace to be bold and loyal like Mary of Magdala.

Apr 24: A man crippled from birth was carried and placed at the gate of the temple called “the Beautiful Gate”...Peter took him by the hand, and immediately his feet and ankles grew strong. He leaped up and walked around. (Acts 3:1-10)

This man has never walked; he probably has never worked. What must this healing have been like for him? We know he was excited, but he was likely scared as well. Imagine how his life would change so accustomed as he was to being dependent. He now not only needed to learn how to walk, but also how to be responsible for himself. Is there anything in your life that cripples you? Feelings of unworthiness, guilt, shame? What other things would change if you could be healed of your affliction? Sometimes, the fear of the unknown can keep us locked in the past. Allow God to calm your fears and set your feet on a path to healing and wholeness.

Apr 25: “Now I know, brothers and sisters, that you acted out of ignorance, just as your leaders did...” (Acts 3:11-16)

The word ignorance is typically used as an insult, but it really means being unaware or lacking in knowledge. I learned how ignorant I was when I began to work with people who made decisions based, not on logic or plans, but on survival. People in survival mode make what many of us would consider bad, even immoral choices. As I have grown older, I realize just how ignorant I really am. We talked the other day about stepping outside our ‘echo chambers’ to open ourselves to hear God’s message in the stories of others. Let’s try to stop acting out of ignorance and instead act out of awareness, understanding, and compassion.

Apr 26: And none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they realized it was the Lord. (Jn 21:1-14)

This is another example of the disciples recognizing Jesus not by his physical appearance but by his ministering presence. Like Mary at the tomb and the disciples on the road to Emmaus, it is when the fishermen hear his call to them (in the Greek, ‘paidia,’ a term of endearment, ‘little children’); when they see breakfast already prepared for them after a long, frustrating night at sea—simple, but oh so special acts of love. They have no need to ask him who he is. They know. Think about this the next time you experience the simple care of another. Do you recognize Jesus?

Apr 27: When Jesus had risen, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene...She went and told his companions who were mourning. When they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. (Mk 16:9-15)

Would you have believed her story that he was alive then? Do you believe he is alive now?