



Come and See!

July 22, 2018

The Word...

Brothers and sisters: In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it.
(from *Eph 2:13-18*)

Pondering the Word...

"For he is our peace."

One of the themes you pick up on in the Pauline letters to the new Gentile Christian communities is dismissing the argument that they are second-class citizens due to the requirements of Jewish law. Through Christ--the fulfillment of the law--any dividing walls, literal and figurative, erected are torn down, so that each and every person might be reconciled with God. This was God's plan all along, and the Jewish people were called to be the harbingers of this new world order where all would be one, united with and in God.

This was God's dream for his children. It is still God's dream for us today: that through God's love and mercy, made flesh in Christ, our peace, we can break through the barriers of fear that keep us closed and "far off" from one another, within our homes and communities, and within our world.

How will you live God's dream of peace today?

Living the Word ...

Take a look around at your life. What walls have you erected? Are they walls to keep you in or others out--or both? I'm not talking here about the basic physical structures we need to shelter us from the elements. Also, there are times in our lives when figurative walls are needed to keep us emotionally safe.

But how can you tell if a wall you've erected is still necessary? Ask yourself, "Does this wall bring me true peace?" Perhaps you erected it at a time when it was really needed, but it has outlasted its usefulness and become a hindrance. Maybe you are just so used to having it as part of your emotional landscape that you don't have the energy to look at what lies beyond.

The only peace we can find in this world is through Christ, the one who came to break down the dividing walls of hate and fear that keep us apart. Ask Christ to help you slowly but surely dismantle those walls that separate you from others and keep you from being truly free.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Jul 23: *Hear, O mountains, the plea of the LORD, pay attention, O foundations of the earth! ..."O my people, what have I done to you, or how have I wearied you? Answer me!"* (Mi 6:1-4, 6-8)

How does it feel to imagine God pleading like this with us? I can intellectualize it and say, 'Well, God isn't like this. God doesn't get frustrated like the God portrayed in the prophetic books. God's not looking for me to answer, blah, blah, blah.' Or I can feel deeply in my heart and soul how God's passionate love for me stirs in him a need to understand why I keep rejecting him, over and over and over again. Sit in prayer with this image of God who wants you to love him as he loves you. Talk to him about the difficulties you face in trying to do what is right and just. Walk humbly with God and share your deepest feelings and fears.

Jul 24: *While Jesus was speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with him. "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak with you."* (Mt 12:46-50)

What do you think Mary and Jesus' brothers want to talk about? Right before this story appears in Mark (3:31-35), there's a passage that says his relatives were trying to seize him, saying, "He is out of his mind." (3:21) What would you speak about to Jesus at this juncture? Imagine yourself as one of the players in this story: are you among the group listening to Jesus? The go-between that alerts Jesus to his mother's presence? Are you Mary or one of his sisters or brothers? Are you Jesus? What goes through your mind and heart during this exchange? Let your imagination lead you in prayer through this difficult passage.

Jul 25: *"We hold this treasure in earthen vessels that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us. We are... perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."* (2 Cor 4: 7-15) And earthen vessels we are indeed, with cracks and imperfections; a bit wobbly, not always in balance. The potter has formed us for perfection, but through use and abuse, being broken and repaired, we have weakened. But God, the potter within, holds us together and allows our vessels to withstand any onslaught!

Jul 26: *"I remember the devotion of your youth, how you loved me as a bride, following me in the desert, in a land unsown."* (Jer 2:1-3, 7-8. 12-13)

Sometimes, I worry about God's memory. 'Are you talking about the Israelites from the Book of Exodus? You know, the ones who complained every step of the way...the ones who built that golden calf? Those Israelites? God, the ultimate parent, doesn't dwell on past hurts or rejections. God remembers the vulnerability and innocence of the people he set free from slavery in Egypt. God acknowledges the leap of faith the Israelites took in venturing out into the barren desert. I think about God's unending love for me, despite my past and present (and future) sinfulness...Come to think of it, I guess I shouldn't worry about God's memory at all!

Jul 27: *"At that time they will call Jerusalem the LORD's throne; there all nations will be gathered together to honor the name of the LORD..."* (Jer 3:14-17)

"This was God's dream for his children. It is still God's dream for us today." A good follow-up to our reflection on Sunday that God's dream is for all nations to be gathered together to honor "the name" of the Lord. Not "my name" for the Lord or "your name" for the Lord. THE name. "O my people, what have I done to you, or how have I wearied you?" 'Why can't you accept that I am all in all, and answer to whatever name each one of you has for me. My relationships are both unique to each and universal to all. This is reason for joy and celebration, not strife and fear and war. Gather together and let me bless and love you—all of you!

Jul 28: *Thus says the LORD: "Reform your ways. Put not your trust in the deceitful words...if each of you deals justly with his neighbor; if you no longer oppress the resident alien, the orphan, and the widow; if you no longer shed innocent blood in this place, or follow strange gods to your own harm, will I remain with you in this place..."* (Jer 7:1-11)

The Book of Jeremiah is not an easy read, but an enlightening one nonetheless. Commentary says it was likely read by the Jewish people in exile, when they had plenty of time to look back and reflect on the state of their lives prior to the Babylonian invasion. As is often the case with prophets, Jeremiah was far more influential after his death, but God's message is the same throughout all generations: reform your ways; treat each other fairly; be kind to strangers and foreigners that live among you; care for the vulnerable; stop shedding innocent blood and succumbing to false gods. If you are feeling "in exile" these days, think about sitting down with Jeremiah and gleaning the lessons so appropriate for our lives today.