



Come and See!

September 30, 2018

The Word...

The LORD bestowed (the spirit) on the seventy elders...
Now two men, Eldad and Medad...had been left in the camp;
yet the spirit came to rest on them also, and they prophesied in the camp.
So, when a young man quickly told Moses,
"Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp," Joshua said,
"Moses, my lord, stop them." But Moses answered him, "Are you jealous for my sake?
Would that all the people of the LORD were prophets!
Would that the LORD might bestow his spirit on them all!"
(from Nm 11:25-29)

Pondering the Word...

Joshua is getting a lesson in what it means to be a leader, a role he will soon take over from Moses. It's a lesson that will be important as he leads the people into the Promised Land and oversees the tribal divisions of and rule of the territory given to the Israelites.

Moses is not at all threatened by God bestowing power on the other elders. He is not concerned Eldad and Medad are not at the "official" ceremony, receiving the "official" rite. Moses remembers his own call to lead. He knows that whomever God chooses to empower, if they remain beholden to God, will speak God's word and do great deeds in God's name.

Moses' ego never enters the picture. He imagines how great life would be if all the people could be prophets and speak in God's name; if the people could go forward with God as their king, their true leader, and not rely on humans who so easily fall prey to power.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus shows the same kind of true leadership. He is not threatened by those doing good works in his name, yet we hear his warning as well: Anyone who leads people astray in his name will suffer a fate worse than death.

With great power comes great responsibility; with great power comes great temptation—a timely and important lesson for our world as well.

Living the Word...

"Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." (Lord John Dalberg-Acton). The struggles and problems we see in our governments and churches today have to do primarily with unchecked power. There seems to be a dearth of true servant leaders. I'm often overwhelmed by the abuse of power I see, and feel impotent to do anything. Yet if I don't want to be part of the problem, I need in some way to be part of the solution. But how? By showing patience with those who think differently from me; by displaying servant leadership as a parent, a manager, a co-worker, a minister; by voting and by speaking out against injustice and abuse. If you are interested in learning about what it means to be a servant leader, Jesus in the gospels is, of course, the great source of guidance. Two other books you may want to consider: *Markings*, by Dag Hammarskjöld, and *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*, by Edwin H. Friedman.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Oct 1: *"Whoever receives a child in my name receives me, and receives the one who sent me."* (Lk 9: 46-50)

The photos will break your heart. Young children, babies on rickety boats, sitting in bombed-out buildings, living in tents, separated from their parents at international borders. We may find ourselves becoming immune or even intolerant of this influx of those escaping poverty and violence. Think of this verse each time you see an image of or read a story about immigrants and refugees. What would Jesus have us do?

Oct 2: *"Perish the day I was born. Why did I not come forth from the womb and expire?"* (Jb 3:1-3, 11-17, 20-23)

You've likely heard the expression, "have the patience of Job." While he refuses to blame God or admit wrongdoing as the source of his plight, he by no means sits by silently. He laments and complains and debates with his friends. He moans and groans and curses the day he was born. But there's something I like about that. When things go wrong, we might think we need to suffer in silence. I'm not sure that's what God expects. If we don't dialogue with God about our suffering, how are we to learn the lessons our sorrow is to teach? Grief, anger, and doubt are all part of our human condition and by squelching them, we can become bitter. If you are dealing with difficulty in your life, tell God of your misery and seek God's comfort.

Oct 3: *Someone said to (Jesus), "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head."* (Lk 9:57-62)

Jesus is an itinerant preacher, someone who travels from place to place spreading their interpretation of God's message. I don't think he's lamenting the lack of a home to call his own, but rather explaining to those eager to follow him one of the costs of discipleship. I guess we could take this literally, sell our houses and possessions, and hit the road, but I think Jesus' message goes beyond that. Being a disciple means we are always on a journey, never quite at rest, alert for opportunities to further the Kingdom. It means ridding our hearts of the things or people that take precedence over God. Often, material possessions are what stands in the way, but it can also be power, reputation, our families, even rigid religious adherence if it causes us to be prideful or self-righteous. What keeps your heart from being a place where Jesus can find rest?

Oct 4: *"I know that my Vindicator lives, and from my flesh I shall see God."* (Jb 19: 21-27) *"I believe I will see the bounty of the Lord in the land of the living."* (Ps 27)

Both Job and the psalmist have been through hard times, beset by enemies and, in Job's case, extraordinary loss. Neither abandons faith in God, the belief God will rescue them, not just at the end of time, but in this life. What does rescue mean? In Job's story, his faith is acknowledged with possessions beyond what he had in the past, but the real reward is the gift of seeing and understanding of the majesty of God. In the Psalms, rescue is often depicted as victory in battle, but the actual gift is an awareness of God's abiding presence. Seeing the bounty of the Lord in this life is not about material wealth or good health or power. It means we are graced to recognize God's majesty everywhere and in all things. Pray for this grace today.

Oct 5: *"Behold, I am of little account; what can I answer you?"* (Jb 38: 1, 12-21; 40: 3-5)

The more I learn about God and creation, the less I really know and the greater my faith. When I abandon my need to have all the answers, to be as a god, the more like Christ I can become. *"Let the peace of God that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."* (Phil 4: 7)

Oct 6: *"Don't rejoice because spirits are subject to you, but because your names are written in heaven."* (Lk 10:17-24)

This is a good bookend for the week. On Sunday, we talked about the need for leaders to put aside their egos and be glad to share the spirit and power God has given them. The disciples have had a heady experience, driving out demons, curing the sick. It would be easy for them to get cocky (and oh, BTW, we know they do!) but Jesus tells them it's not about them at all. It's all about God working through them. Perhaps the leaders of our own churches need to be reminded that true leaders in God's Kingdom are servants who inspire new servant leaders, not autocrats who keep a stronghold on power and authority.