



Come and See!

November 12, 2017

The Word...

"The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins.
Five of them were foolish and five were wise.
The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them,
but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps.
Since the bridegroom was long delayed,
they all became drowsy and fell asleep.
At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom!
The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil,
but the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you.
Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.'
(from Mt 25:1-13, adapted)

Pondering the Word ...

When this passage rolls around, I am always reminded St. Teresa of Calcutta's beautiful prayer:

Do not think that love, in order to be genuine, has to be extraordinary.

What we need is to love without getting tired. How does a lamp burn?

Through the continuous input of small drops of oil.

*If the drops of oil run out, the light of the lamp will cease,
and the bridegroom will say, "I do not know you" (Mt. 25:12).*

My daughters, what are these drops of oil in our lamps?

*They are the small things of daily life: Faithfulness, punctuality, small words of kindness,
a thought for others, our way of being silent, of looking, of speaking, and of acting.*

*These are the true drops of love...Be faithful in small things
because it is in them that your strength lies.*

Jesus reminds us at the end of this passage to "stay awake," and yet we hear that all the young women—both the wise ones and the foolish—fell asleep waiting for the bridegroom to arrive. My guess is that the wise ones rested well because the reserve supply of oil they carried was gathered in small drops they collected along the way. They had no need to panic, to run out at the last minute, risking and losing that which they desired so much. Their lamps were burning brightly.

Living the Word...

I don't think Jesus intends for us to live our lives on edge, on high alert. ("Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your lives?" Mt. 6:27) The real key to being ready for Christ's coming is awareness, paying attention, living life not on auto-pilot, but by being so tuned in to the world that we are continually surprised by God! If we live fully, we will never miss opportunities to add those small drops of oil to our lamps, and we will rest easy, knowing that when our Bridegroom finally arrives, our lamps will shine brightly, welcoming him into our hearts!

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Nov 13: *"God is the witness of (man's) inmost self, the sure observer of his heart, the listener to his tongue."*(Wis 1:1-7)
Have you even met someone who seems to see right through you? It can leave you feeling exposed and vulnerable. But what if that person loves you, looks out for your interests, and wants to keep you from harm at the expense of his or her own needs, even his or her own life? While you may feel unworthy and unnerved, you may also feel great comfort at being known so well and still so loved. Not many experience such devotion, but if you have, count your blessings. You have just a taste of the eternal love God has for each one of us.

Nov 14: *"So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'"*(Lk 17:7-10)

The Greek translation is closer to "useless slaves." So how does that feel for those of us raised on a steady diet of self-esteem building?! Sounds pretty brutal, like we are worthless and can't do anything to improve our lot. "Hey, what about God's love we read about yesterday? This sure doesn't sound like the same God to me." I guess that's one way to look at it. Another way is to see God's graciousness at work. All we are, all we have are gifts from God. We do not earn them, and as Paul reminds, we cannot boast, for faith and righteousness are gifts. Our very call to discipleship is a gift as well, that we are given the opportunity to build God's Kingdom. *What shall I return to the LORD for all his goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.* (Ps 116: 12-14)

Nov 15: *"Desire therefore my words; long for them and you shall be instructed."* (Wis 6:1-11)

The author of the Book Wisdom admonishes leaders of the people that more is expected of those who have been given power: "judgment is stern for the exalted." And, of those who exalt themselves, as Jesus reminds us (Mt 23:12), and those to whom more is given (Lk 12:48). I wonder if our leaders desire the Spirit's wisdom. Are they listening to her? I wonder: I have been given so much. Am I longing for Wisdom and listening to her?

Nov 16: *"The coming of the Kingdom of God cannot be observed, and no one will announce, 'Look, here it is,' or, 'There it is.' For behold, the Kingdom of God is among you."* (Lk 17:20-25)

In his book, *Stories of God*, John Shea challenges us to think of God not so much as a character or event in our life stories, but the plot or the context. He says to imagine we are "undergoing" God as our stories and lives unfold. Shea encourages us to look beyond the events of God's interventions in history to God's intention for our world. The Kingdom is not here or there. It is everywhere. Live today in awareness of this gift. "

Nov 17: *"They search busily among his works, but are distracted, because the things seen are fair."*(Wis 13:1-9)

I love the poetry and metaphors used in the Book of Wisdom. Here, the author is musing about those who see the beauty and majesty of creation without recognizing God, "the original source of beauty who fashioned them." Sometimes I am so busy living in the Kingdom that I fail to take the time to thank God for the "works of art" that surround me. But more challenging is to recognize God's handiwork in the ordinary; or, even more, in loss, sorrow, and pain. No, not all of God's works are fair and lovely. Yet that is where faith comes into play. Look around today. Give God glory and thanks for all that is beautiful. Ask the Spirit of Wisdom to enlighten you to see how God might be working in ordinary things and difficult times.

Nov 18: *"Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? ...But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"* (Lk 18:1-8)

Jesus poses a rhetorical question at the end of this verse. It sounds like he may be asking himself this with a heavy sigh, perhaps doubting he will find faith when he returns. This passage is about persistence and patience in prayer, and those around him are so eager for the Kingdom of Israel to be restored, patience seems in short supply. What must he think of us today with our demand for immediate answers and resolutions?! It is difficult for us to wait on God's time, to allow God to grant what we need, which is not always what we want or pray for. We are approaching the blessed season of Advent, a time of waiting in patience. See if you can get a head start, not just on gift buying or cooking or decorating, but on developing patience—with each other and with God who has given to his faithful the greatest gift—the Son of Man.