



# Come and See!

Week of August 17, 2025, 20 OT

## The Word...

“Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,  
let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and  
persevere in running the race...while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus”  
(*Heb 12:1-4*).

“Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth?  
No, I tell you, but rather division”  
(*Lk 12:49-53*).

## Pondering the Word...

We reflected last week about having courage in community. The reading from Hebrews emphasizes the importance of community—a great cloud of witnesses—and surrounding ourselves with support systems to help us persevere in running the race; to give us courage to renounce every burden and sin.

But the most important part in this passage is to make sure we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and what Jesus has to say. Many of us participate, not so much in communities as in echo chambers. We hang with people who value what we value, who think like we do. It's understandable. We all do it. Jesus even tells the disciples he sends out to evangelize not to waste time with people who are not willing to listen! (Mt 10:14).

So, what are we to make of what Jesus says today!? In today's reading from Jeremiah (and in most prophetic books), we learn prophets who preach against the powers that be are rarely welcomed and often abused. John the Baptist and Jesus, who many looked upon as a prophet, brought about division, condemning the status quo. They paid with their lives as did Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, and countless other unnamed saints.

We are called as prophets, too, by our baptismal vow. So, does that mean we are to bring about division? Tough question. To be a prophet, we need to be able to speak God's truth, and yes, that may mean we are rejected. But we speak the truth without malice, anger, or violence. Tough assignment, especially when there are so many “variations of the truth” out there.

We call upon our “cloud of witnesses,” we call upon Jesus to be with us any time we find ourselves in a prophetic role. We remember: *“When two or three are gathered in my name, I am there with them.”*

## Living the Word...

A few brief thoughts for living in prayer this week: Who is in your cloud of witnesses? Biblical figures? (Ruth, who we read about this week, is one of mine!), Saints? Current leaders? (Rev. William Barber is in my “cloud!”) What is it about these people that speaks to you? Second, think about your community. Hopefully, it is healthy and life-giving. Are there differences of opinions? Are you open to listen? Do you make sure to start any interaction invoking the presence of Jesus' Spirit? (Note: if you want to learn more about nonviolence, Walter Wink's book, *The Powers That Be*, is a good choice.)

## Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

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**Mon, Aug 18:** *The children of Israel offended the LORD...they followed other gods of the various nations around them* (Jgs 2:11-19). We like to fit in. The Israelites did too. It's hard to be the only tribe whose God is unseen, who have commandments from and a covenant with an invisible deity. **Provision: How do we try to fit in? What other "gods" do we worship?** It's hard to be the only person who keeps quiet when others are gossiping. It's hard to be the kid who eats lunch with the lonely kid who's being bullied. It's hard to be a prophet. It's hard to know when patriotism becomes nationalism. Reflect on how "fitting in" might distract you from God's will.

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**Tue, Aug 19:** *Gideon said, "If the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us?"...The LORD said, "Go with the strength you have ... "I shall be with you" (Jgs 6:11-24).* Can you identify with Gideon's question? I sure can! I talk with people every day who ask, "Where is God in this mess?" Of course, it's mess we've created by the false gods of gold and power, made worse by the sins of greed, nationalism, and hate. God hasn't left us, although I can hear the psalmist's words Jesus uttered from the cross burst forth from the lips of many in war-torn and starvation-ridden countries, and from internment camps and prisons: *"My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"* **Provision: "Go with the strength you have."** I love this translation from the NAB. I live comfortably, provided for in abundance. I have no right to ask Gideon's question, even though I can identify with it. Those of us blessed with security and plenty need to go with the strength we have, with the outrage we feel, to make our voices heard and our presence known. I, for one, have no right to sit in the confines of my enclave, and lament about the state of our world. I must go with the strength I have, to use my body to stand side-by-side with those oppressed, to use my voice to confront uncomfortable truths. What is your strength? How will you go forward to use it for good? Remember: God shall be with us.

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**Wed, Aug 20:** *"The Kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. Going out about nine o'clock...again around noon, and around three o'clock, at five o'clock did likewise" (Mt 20:1-16, adapted).* The landowner doesn't ask the workers where they come from. He doesn't care about their nationality or religion. He sees people willing to do the hard work of laboring in his vineyard. He is generous to all who are willing to work. **Provision: What do you think is fair?**

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**Thurs, Aug 21:** *"The servants gathered all they found, bad and good... When the king came in, he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment. He said, 'My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?' But he was reduced to silence" (Mt 22:1-14).* This parable bugs me. I've heard it used to defend exclusionary religious practices. I always go back to scholarly exegesis to be reminded it's an allegory. Lots of people get invited to the feast. The A-listers are too busy, so those that others might deem unworthy (good and bad) get invited. Bottom line though: it is not enough to just be invited, not enough to just show up. You have to RSVP "Yes!" **Provision: Speak up.** The king calls the man, "My friend." This guy is just overwhelmed and doesn't know what to say. We might feel that way too if we've just been showing up and not responding to God's call. Speak up. Ask God to help you weave a "wedding garment" worthy of the feast! (And for those who would use this to exclude, let's remember it's the king that makes the judgment, not the other guests!)

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**Fri, Aug 22:** *"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, your soul, and mind.... You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:34-40).* It's a Trinity: Love God, love self, love others...a continuous line, ever linked and unbroken...unless we choose to do so. **Provision: Love yourself.** There's a difference between self-love: self-centered egoism, and love of self: loving the unique person God created. Most people struggle with love of self. But for the line of love to be unbroken, all three parts must be intact. Love yourself as God loves you.

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**Sat, Aug 23:** *"They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues" (Mt 23:1-12).* It causes me such angst to see some people on the news these days wearing crosses and crucifixes while spewing hate and spreading lies. It is unconscionable to me, far worse than what Jesus accuses the Pharisees of doing. **Provision: What do you think Jesus would say to us now?** Really. In the privacy of your own heart, away from the influencers on both sides of the political aisle, away from friends and family who might decry the hateful and dangerous policies and practices that are happening but continue to excuse and support those leaders who have put them in place. What do you want to say to Jesus?