



# Come and See!

Week of August 30, 2020

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## The Word...

“You duped me, O LORD, and I let myself be duped...  
I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more.  
But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones;  
I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.” *(from Jer 20:7-9)*

“...my flesh pines and my soul thirsts like the earth, parched, lifeless and  
without water.” *(from Ps 63)*

“...offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God...”  
*(from Rom 12:1-2)*

“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself,  
take up his cross, and follow me.” *(from Mt 16:21-27)*

## Pondering the Word...

I read an account years ago about a revered Eastern guru whose long-anticipated talk in the US was delayed eight hours due to travel issues. When he finally arrived at the venue, he began by giving those new to the spiritual practice the option to leave “while they still could.” The spiritual path, he said, is rife with delays and detours, disappointments and struggles. But for those already on the path, he confirmed that leaving was not an option. If it was, then they were not yet on the path.

Today’s readings are all about the depth—and yes, the cost—of intimacy with God. It is no wonder so many people choose to keep their religious practice on the surface, checking the boxes and following rules, keeping their faith life separate from the rest of life as a way to avoid falling in love with and committing to God. Because “falling in love will decide everything.” (From the prayer attributed to Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ)

As a spiritual director, I often hear people talk about their desire to surrender: “I want to surrender, but how do I do it?” Surrender is a willed act. If you think about it, it’s not something we can do on our own; otherwise, it wouldn’t be surrender! We pray for the grace to surrender by allowing ourselves to come closer to God, to let God, as the Hebrew translation says, “entice” us, and by allowing ourselves to be enticed into an increasingly deeper and more intimate relationship that does not negate rote worship and rules but transcends them.

Jeremiah cannot turn away. The psalmist describes separation from God in desperate, physical terms. Paul and Jesus talk, not about giving up material things, but offering our very selves. Surrender means we come to think as God thinks. It comes when we finally realize we have no option. There’s nowhere else that we can go.

## Living the Word...

*“Nothing is more practical than finding God; that is falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in Love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.”*

Don’t just recite this prayer. Do it. Live it. It will decide everything.

## Personal Reflections and Ideas...

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**Mon, Aug 31:** *“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom...so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.”* (1 Cor 2:1-5)

Weakness, fear, and trembling are not words we normally associate with Paul, but he is not talking here about being scared. He is talking about allowing God’s great power to be manifest, about getting himself and his ego and intellect out of the way, and letting God act and speak through him. It’s easy to fall into the snare of relying on our own knowledge and research rather than being an open channel for the Spirit—I am all too familiar with that trap. *In what ways would your life change if you were to “know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified?”*

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**Tue, Sep 1:** *“But we have the mind of Christ.”* (1 Cor 2:10-16)

Paul knows his audience. He is talking to the Corinthians, people accustomed to hearing the Sophists and other philosophers debate. People who put a lot of stock in things of the mind. When I read this verse, I ask myself: *do I put too much emphasis on having the mind of Christ and not enough on having his heart?*

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**Wed, Sep 2:** *“Therefore, neither the one who plants (Paul) nor the one who waters (Apollos) is anything, but only God, who causes the growth!”* (1 Cor 3:1-9)

Humor me a minute: The more I read Scripture, the more it puzzles me that so many people—including leaders in my own church—don’t seem to comprehend the clear messages it have for us today. Am I missing something or are they? The brand new Christian community of Corinth is dividing itself into camps based on whether one was converted by Paul or by Apollos. In actuality, by creating camps, it seems they weren’t converted at all! At the start of this passage, Paul explains: he feeds them as if they are “infants” in the spiritual life. *“If there is jealousy and rivalry among you, are you not of the flesh, walking in the manner of men?”* You’d think that after 2,000 years, we’d get this. But we don’t. We continue to divide and dissect the Body of Christ, walking by our own rules and not by God’s. *What can you do today to begin to heal the Body of Christ which still bleeds at our hands?*

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**Thu, Sep 3:** *To the Lord belongs the earth and all that fills it.* (Ps 24)

Today is Day 3 of the annual ecumenical “Season of Creation,” which runs from September 1 through the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4. (<https://seasonofcreation.org/>) The start of today’s psalm could be considered the basis for this whole movement and a reminder to each of us about what is “ours,” what is “mine.” The earth is not ours. It is God’s. Everything that fills the earth is God’s. We set up boundaries and fences to delineate “my” property from the next door neighbors’. We declare “manifest destiny” as if our abuse of the land and its resources are somehow granted to us by God. Spoiler alert: God’s earth will continue long after we humans are gone. Much of what fills the earth will survive—maybe thrive—when our time is up. If we’d like our species to hang around a bit longer, perhaps it’s time to pay attention to the psalmist’s words. *How do you think the Lord feels about the way we are treating his earth?*

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**Fri, Sep 4:** *“And no one who has been drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good.’”* (Lk 5: 33-39)

Not many people like change. They prefer to live their lives, as Thoreau says, in quiet desperation rather than to do the work change requires. The last thing they want to do is throw out the old wine and wineskins to which they’ve become accustomed -- and which might include their giving up power -- even for something that could be life-giving and refreshing or benefit to future generations. *What is the “new wine” you resist, spiritually or practically? Do you dismiss change out-of-hand? What keeps you from even tasting the new wine of transformation?*

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**Sat, Sep 5:** *“The Lord is near to all who call upon him.”* (Ps 145)

Calling on God can comfort us and bring us a feeling of nearness and love, but we do not call on God to be near. God is already near. As the 15<sup>th</sup> century priest, Erasmus, said *“Bidden or unbidden, God is present.”* It is up to us to move closer, to accept God’s intimate presence in our lives. God is always by our side, and by calling upon him, we acknowledge and confirm this amazing gift. *Call upon God today and see just how close God is right now!*