



# Come and See!

Week of September 20, 2020

## The Word...

“Seek the LORD while he may be found, call him while he is near.  
Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked his thoughts;  
let him turn to the LORD for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving.  
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.  
As high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so high are my ways above your ways  
and my thoughts above your thoughts.  
*(Is 55:6-9)*

## Pondering the Word...

Does it ever worry you that what you think is good and right, what you think is “God’s way” is not what God intends at all? Our thoughts are not God’s thoughts, so how do we know? What does God think about the violence and evil in the world? Apt punishment for our sinfulness? Our ways are not God’s ways, so do we sin when we follow civil laws that don’t exactly line up with what we see as right? Or, do we sin when we go along with doctrines and opinions of our chosen practice that don’t align with our conscience or cognitive intellect?

These are tough questions, especially in light of how differently other religions view the nature of God. As Christians, we model ourselves after Christ, but we need only to look at the tens of thousands of Christian denominations to see differing opinions as well. The Body of Christ is indeed divided!

The good news is we can always seek the Lord for guidance, consolation, and forgiveness. If we do our best with a sincere heart, God will look past our missteps and errors to the essence of our intention. Turn to the Lord for mercy today.

*My Lord God I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me...and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing....I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen. (Thomas Merton)*

## Living the Word...

Isaiah adds a sense of urgency to his message by using the word, “while:” while God is near, while God still can be found, as if to say God’s patience won’t last forever. This is a consistent prophetic message due to the prophets’ zeal to convert the hearts of God’s people. But Jesus assures us God’s patience is unending and that if we seek, we will find; if we knock, the door will be opened. Don’t be discouraged by doubt or fear. Seek God today. He was, is, and always will be near.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mon, Sep 21:** *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork."* (Ps 19)

There is nothing that inspires devotion like a clear quiet starlit night away from the lights and the noise of the city. As I read this psalm verse, the news feed is full of photos of the skies on the west coast of the US blotted out by fire and ash. Earlier this year, people in northern India were able to see the Himalayas for the first time in 30 years, the smog finally lifting due to the reduced number of vehicles on the roads. When we pollute the skies and increase the likelihood of catastrophic fires all over the world as a result of climate change, we sully the firmament, we obscure the heavens. What good is a race to Mars when we've not shown ourselves worthy of the planet we've been given? Let's heed the warnings of our modern-day prophets. Like the prophets of old, they are often ignored...until it is too late.

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**Tue, Sep 22:** *"Whoever makes a fortune by a lying tongue is chasing a bubble over deadly snares... He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will himself also call and not be heard."* (Prv 21: 1-6, 10-13)

Wow, what great imagery! It speaks of the emptiness of ill-gotten fortune and the risks such a pursuit poses, and its applicability to some leaders today is stunning in its indictment. It's infuriating to see such behavior go on with impunity. But all of us are reminded in the later verse: if we fail to hear and respond to the cries of the poor, our cries for mercy will fall on deaf ears as well. The rolls and the plight of those in need are only going to increase as this global crisis continues. How will you open your ears and your heart to the poor?

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**Wed, Sep 23:** *"...give me neither poverty nor riches; provide me only with the food I need; Lest, being full, I deny you, saying, 'Who is the LORD?' Or, being in want, I steal, and profane the name of my God."* (Prv 30:5-9)

There's a blessing that goes something like "may you always have a dollar more than you need." (Actually, I think it was a dime, but those days are long gone!) The author of Proverbs points to the risks of having too much or too little. But there's a way to remedy this. Let's get all those who have too much (and have lost their dependence on God—the rich man and the eye of the needle problem) to share with those who have too little and turn in their despair to crime. Sounds so lovely, doesn't it? Of course, it's complex, but Jesus tells us for God, all things are possible. *'The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed.'* (Gandhi) If we truly believe nothing is impossible for God then let's get to it! Think about small changes you can make in your own life to share with those who have less.

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**Thu, Sep 24:** *"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart."* (Ps 90)

Has the pandemic taught you to number your days aright? Early on, the photos of morgues in refrigerated trucks in the Bronx sent most of us into hiding, fearing for our lives (except of course for the brave medical professionals who fight on the front lines of this battle). As the global death toll closes in on a million, 200,000 in the US, it seems any wisdom the heart has gained has given way to doing what "I" want to do. Sadly for some, this wisdom will be hard learned when illness and death hit them where they live. We are called to persevere, not only for ourselves but for the good of all. Let's recommit today to taking care of each other.

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**Fri, Sep 25:** *"There is an appointed time for everything...a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces. A time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away."* (Ecc 3:1-11)

Just to be clear: this is the time to be far from embraces! But what about the other adages: a time to lose, a time to cast away? There's lots of talk about things "getting back to normal." Spoiler alert: Normal is what got us here—do we really want to go back there? Things have to change, we have to change. That doesn't mean we don't look forward to the days when we can embrace loved ones again. But *"life goes not backwards or tarries with yesterday."* There are things to cast away, things that will be lost. But our hope is not in things. It is in Christ.

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**Sat, Sep 26:** *Jesus said to his disciples, "Pay attention to what I am telling you. The Son of Man is to be handed over to men." But they did not understand...and they were afraid to ask him about this saying.* (Lk 9:43B-45)

*"Humans cannot get answers to questions they've never asked."* (Paul Tillich) Jesus knows the questions in your heart. He even knows why and how they arise. Don't think they are not pious enough or holy enough. Abraham Joshua Heschel once said we are much closer to God when we are asking the questions than when we think we have the answers. So ask Jesus those burning questions. Then let him answer. Don't answer for him. Listen. Be patient, and as Rilke wrote, *"we may one day live into the answers."*