



Come and See!

Week of September 15, 2024

The Word...

"The Lord GOD opens my ear that I may hear"
(Is 50:5-9).

"I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living"
(Ps 116).

"What good is it if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and you say, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead"
(Jas 2:14-18).

"Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do"
(Mk 8:27-35).

Pondering the Word ...

The theme of today's readings: Hear as God hears, walk as God walks, see as God sees, think as God thinks.

"Ok, then, any questions? So, let's get out there and live as God lives!"

Living the Word ...

We talked last week about seeing ourselves as God sees us. This is a vital first step. If we have trouble looking at ourselves with love and mercy, it will be hard to look at others that way, too. I know people who have tried, but they often wind up bitter and jaded because they fail to keep a God's-eye view.

So, what would it take for you to hear as God hears? Maybe it's listening to someone without having to plan what to say in response, so much so that you really don't hear what the other is saying. Maybe it is listening to things other than the words being said; instead, listening to body language or what words are used. Maybe it's not responding with answers but expressing wonder at what the Spirit might be saying to the person.

How does God walk in the land of the living? Slowly, purposely, in awareness of beauty and of what needs tending. God also walks with others, tuned into if they need things to be slower or when it is time to pick up the pace.

God sees by looking not at appearances, but into the heart. God sees past externals and doesn't make assumptions about what the other might or "should" want (*"What would you have me do for you?"*).

God thinks about the big, enormous, universal picture AND God thinks about the little freeze frame that is my life. But most important: God has faith. God has hope. God loves. *"Now, go and do likewise."*

Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

Mon, Sep 16: *"I hear when you meet as a Church there are divisions among you, and to a degree I believe it; there have to be factions among you in order that those who are approved among you may become known... Therefore, my brothers and sisters, when you come together, wait for one another"* (1Cor 11:17-26, 33). Arrghh! This is another thing I'd like to "discuss" with Paul. It becomes obvious in this part of the letter that he gets caught up in the "who's approved and who's not" and in the hierarchy. If memory serves me, Jesus never had an approved guest list at the door! **Provision: Whom do you exclude?** A midrash tale: All creation is gathered at a banquet table to enjoy the feast, but Jesus is not there. Peter goes out looking for him and finds him at the front gate. He says, "Everything is ready for the feast." Jesus answers him, "We can't start yet. We must wait for Judas." Spend some time in prayer reflecting: are there those you exclude from the banquet table?

Tue, Sep 17: *[Jesus] stepped forward and touched the coffin..."Young man, I tell you, arise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak... Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, exclaiming..."God has visited his people"* (Lk 7:11-17). *"You do not have to move mountains to see the strength of love at work in your life. Sometimes it is enough just to move yourself. To step sideways to understand how the world looks to another person. To step back from judgment. To step forward to embrace a person in need. To step up to faith when justice calls your name. To step down from the pedestals privilege provides. To step away from what you know is wrong. To step into the light when the shadows grow too close. Miracles are not always an act of God. Sometimes they are a choice of the human heart"* (Charleston, Steven. *Climbing Stairs of Sunlight: A Spiritual Diary*. Red Moon Publications. 2013, 2/28).

Wed, Sep 18: *"Love is patient, love is kind...Love never fails...the greatest of these is love"* (1 Cor 12:31-13:13). Some of the most beautiful words in Scripture are written by Paul—another reason I'd like to sit and talk with him! So, we believe God is love and we believe God is within all of us. So, we are love. I like to remind people on Ash Wednesday that we are not only dust, but love, and unto love we will return. **Provision: Pray with Paul's description to look at your own life.** Replace "Love is" with "I am:" "I am patient, I am kind, I'm not rude. I don't seek my own interests; I rejoice in the truth..." If we are striving to see and hear and walk and do as God does, which of these descriptors of love could use some work? Pray for the specific grace to love more.

Thu, Sep 19: *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective"* (1 Cor 15: 1-11). By the grace of God, we are all who we are. And I hope we are learning to love who we are! But what about the ways we are using God's grace? Are we effective in how we bring to bear our God-given grace in the world? Or do we hide God's grace because we think we must be perfect or smarter or stronger or older or younger or...fill in the blank? **Provision: Pray to the Spirit to help you use the graces you've been given.** What are the gifts and graces you've been given? How do you use them for the betterment of your community?

Fri, Sep 20: *"Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full"* (Ps 17). I've read lots of translations of this little verse, and all impart a sense of confidence. There is no fear expressed, no hiding from God's face. *"I will take my fill, wide awake, in your presence."* *"When I get up, I'll see your full stature and live heaven on earth."* *"Let me see your face; when I awake, let me be filled with your presence."* The psalmist is not waiting around for some big event for God's glory to appear. It is here every day when we awake! **Provision: Stop. Right now. Look upon God's glory!** Don't worry if you've been up for a while, or even if you woke up on the wrong side of the bed. Look out the window. Look at other people. Heck, look in the mirror! See God's glory right here, right now.

Sat, Sep 21 *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day pours out the word to day, and night to night imparts knowledge. Not a word nor a discourse whose voice is not heard; Through all the earth their voice resounds, and to the ends of the world, their message"* (Ps 19). When was the last time you allowed the heavens, the firmament, nature to speak to you? Not in words, not on billboards, not accompanied by some talking heads on the car radio or phone. When was the last time you were willing to listen to the wisdom and knowledge imparted by the silence of nature? **Provision: Stop again. Right now. Listen to God's glory!** We could learn a lot from nature. Expressing God's glory, not by the words we say, but by being God's living presence. "Let your life speak." (Quaker saying—and a wonderful memoir by Parker Palmer!)