



Come and See!

Week of January 19, 2025

The Word ...

Brothers and sisters: There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit
(1 Cor 12:4-11).

Pondering the Word ...

(Let us begin by offering prayers for the thousands of people impacted by the fires in California, and all those worldwide who experience the impacts of natural disasters and climate change every day.)

This passage from Corinthians is an example of the importance of “courage in community,” our theme for this year.

The lead article in February’s *The Atlantic* magazine is entitled, “The Anti-Social Century” It’s yet another take on what has been called “the epidemic of loneliness,” a malady impacting mostly developed countries. The lack of real community where we all can experience the gifts and support of others has been replaced with a façade where people hide behind false selves, where our true giftedness is buried by image or fealty to whomever is in power. The statistics cited in the article, particularly those about young people, are disturbing and sad.

I think about the story in the gospel today, the wedding feast of Cana. The whole community comes together to celebrate two young people. I see Mary, who, among a wealth of spiritual graces, has the great gift of paying attention. She sees a need and calls upon Jesus to use one of his gifts—not to preach or to heal or to exorcise—but to keep the festivities going, to keep the community together for a while longer...180 gallons worth of wine longer...that’s “some benefit!”

Living the Word ...

I want to share a commentary on the wedding feast story from my friend, Bob Hamm, SJ, whom I have quoted before. He quips that when Jesus says to Mary, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come,” Mary’s unrecorded response is, “Well, *your* hour may not have come, but *mine* has!” I love that she calls him forth to begin what he was put on earth to do! And I imagine it took courage for Jesus to step up, knowing what the future held for him.

So how does that play out in our lives? For those of us who’ve lived a while, who have experienced the great joy of sharing gifts in community: Do you know young people who could use encouragement to share their gifts? Are you holding onto roles or responsibilities that you should turn over to the next generation? (Politicians, please take note!) Perhaps you yourself have been reluctant to share your giftedness (remember: “*To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit*”); or, you have peers who are afraid to step forward, who don’t see their giftedness.

It’s up to each of us to summon our courage, step out of our hiding places, and use our gifts to build “the beloved community” Dr. King envisioned. Our hour has come. Do what you can this week to call forth giftedness.

Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

Mon, Jan 20: *"No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak"* (Mk 2:18-22).

Some people have a favorite article of clothing they've held onto long past its prime. It doesn't get worn much, maybe just around the house, but it evokes fond memories. The poor understand the idea of patching an old cloak to extend its usefulness, but there comes a time when that just doesn't work anymore. **Provision: What things in your life might need to be "retired?" When will you stop "shrinking?" as a way to hold onto the past?** Old habits, old ways of thinking; old affiliations that put you at odds with others; old prayer practices and rituals; old excuses that just don't cut it anymore. Pray for the Spirit to enlighten you. Ask to see the new things God has in store.

Tue, Jan 21: *"The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath"* (Mk 2:23-28).

A cartoon: a bunch of friends (stereotypically male) watching sports all day, snack bags and cans scattered everywhere, with someone (likely a "mom figure,") hands on hips, appearing on the scene. The caption: "But, Mom, the sabbath was made for man!" **Provision: Make the sabbath a day of gratitude!** Sabbath is a day set aside for rest. How many of us do that? It's good to start out with a ritual acknowledgement of God in our lives, be that at our place of worship, in prayer, in service of others. But I get it: many don't have the luxury of taking a full day of rest. So, as you clean the house, care for ailing loved ones, and yes, watch sports, praise and give thanks to God for all things!

Wed, Jan 22: *"Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?"* (Mk 3:1-6).

It seems Jesus is saying this: for him to forgo healing the man with the withered hand in favor of following the law would be committing an evil. It would be a sin of omission: seeing a need and ignoring it. I've talked to several people recently—church employees, medical professionals, teachers, in particular—who are terrified by the possibility of authorities bursting into their classrooms and businesses to round up those identified as being in the US illegally. Some school districts have already sent out procedures to address this. **Provision: What is your opinion? What will you do if faced with this situation?** Don't say, "Oh, this won't happen." It already is. Some have suggested children will be targeted so authorities can more easily get to their parents. How will Christians explain this to their child whose terrified best friend is escorted out of the classroom? I ask myself: Will I be like Jesus, willing to risk confronting the law to help someone in need?

Thu, Jan 23: *"They worship in a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary"* (Heb 7:25-8:6).

In Exodus 25-31, Moses is up on the mountain and, aside from getting the Ten Commandments, God gives him precise details about the tabernacle, the sanctuary for the tablets. At the foot of the mountain, the people are antsy and decide to create their own version of god. **Provision: Is it "where" or "what" you worship, or "who" you worship?** For Christians, Jesus is the tabernacle that goes with us wherever we go. We sometimes confuse "the who" with "the what" or "the where." We get antsy and risk defining god as an institution or a set of rules. We limit our faith practice to a specific time or place. Today, let's make sure we have our sights set on the Real Thing.

Fri, Jan 24: *"Justice before him goes, that he set his footsteps on the way"* (Ps 85, Hebrew translation).

What do you think this means? Hebrew scholar Robert Alter says, *"Justice leads the way and God, preparing to walk about the earth after having withdrawn from it in his wrath, follows the path marked out by justice."* Some see wars, insurrections, and natural disasters to be signs of God's impending arrival detailed in Daniel, Revelations, or Jesus' words in Matthew 24. I imagine those who have faced flash floods and fires feel the world is ending. But where is the justice that's supposed to precede God's arrival? **Provision: Is God waiting for us to "get it?"** I've suggested this before. I don't think it is heresy. I don't know what God has planned (and frankly, no one does!). But perhaps we could think about this in our personal lives. Are there injustices you have witnessed you want to work to rectify? Do you live justly? (I need to look at how my ingrained habits hurt the earth and others.) Where can you mark out a path of justice on which God can walk?

Sat, Jan 25: *"And [the women] reported all the instructions briefly to Peter's companions. Afterwards, Jesus himself, through them, sent forth from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation"* (Mk 16: the shorter ending).

Scholars suggest Mark's original gospel ends at 16:8, a "cliff-hanger" of sorts. The author leaves it up to the reader to take the next step: What do you think will happen? If indeed it was supposed to end at that verse, then the last words would be "they were afraid." And yet, if you consider this shorter ending, maybe the women, after "briefly" sharing Jesus' instructions, head right out to follow these instructions themselves! **Provision: Do not be afraid.** The most oft-repeated words in scripture. Jesus does not ask us to pick up serpents or drink poison or drive out demons. He asks us to courageously carry his message of sacred eternal salvation: *"Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature!"*