



# Come and See!

Week of November 10, 2024

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## The Word...

Elijah called out to [the widow], "Please bring me a small cupful of water to drink, bring along a bit of bread." She answered, "As the LORD, your God, lives, there is only a handful of flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug. I was collecting a couple of sticks, to go in and prepare something for myself and my son; when we have eaten it, we shall die." Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid." She did as Elijah had said  
(1 Kgs 17:10-16).

A poor widow put in two small coins. "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood"  
(Mk 12:41-44).

## Pondering the Word...

As I write this a few days before the election, I cannot predict what the "temperature" will be in the public sector, but the Spirit has given me some food for thought.

In *The Atlantic* magazine, the author and podcaster, Albert C. Brooks, writes a delightful column called "How to Build a Life." The October 31, 2024, installment is entitled, "Why You Might Need an Adventure." (<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2024/10/adventure-happiness-hero-journey/680441/>. I'm not sure everyone can access this, but it's worth a try.) In a very small nutshell, he suggests that when we are in a rut, we might benefit from an adventure, taking a risk of some sort to shake us out of our lethargy or despair.

Ok, but what the heck does this have to do with the readings or with the state of affairs in which we find ourselves? The women we read about today are in dire straits. The Zarephath widow is preparing a last meal before she and her son die of starvation, but she obliges Elijah's request to feed him first. The widow at the temple donates a few cents—all that she has—to the temple treasury. Both are taking a risk, relying on faith in "the Lord, the God of Israel," to save them and to provide for and comfort them in their despair.

So, let's say, you and I take a risk today: Have faith. Have hope.

## Living the Word...

If you are confused and frustrated, low on hope, consider the stories of people in Scripture: Abram and Sarai, ("hoping against hope") who venture out based on a promise; young David, whose faith allows him to overcome Goliath. Mary, willing to take a huge risk with her "yes." Jesus, standing in silence in the face of death; the early Christian communities being pulled and attacked from different sides, confused and frustrated, yet enduring in faith and hope. Read books like Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* and Etty Hillesum's *An Interrupted Life* that show remarkable courage and hope in the face of despair of the Holocaust. Call upon the Communion of Saints, loved ones who have gone before you, and ask for the grace you need to maintain faith and hope.

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

**Mon, Nov 11:** *"Things that cause sin will inevitably occur, but woe to the one through whom they occur. ...If your brother sins and repents, forgive him. And if he wrongs you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times saying, 'I am sorry,' forgive him. 'Increase our faith'"* (Lk 17:1-6). Whoa, there's a lot packed into these few verses: "Sin happens. When it does, forgive. And, oh, BTW, without faith, avoiding sin and forgiving will be pretty darn hard!" **Provision: Pray for faith.** The faith we are talking about here is not some statement of belief or theological concept. It is "mud wrestling" faith. Down and dirty faith. Faith that is alive and active lest the things that cause sin—particularly those pesky sins of omission caused by busyness and distraction—come creeping up on us unawares. The kind of faith that doesn't ignore our wounds but gives us courage to love and to forgive. Let's pray for *that* kind of faith today!

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**Tue, Nov 12:** *"For the grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age"* (Ti 2:1-8, 11-14). Today's and tomorrow's readings from Titus are high on the "ugh" factor for me: the role of women as "good homemakers;" the Christian communities being "under the control of authorities." The whole "slaves being under control of their masters" thing is in there, too, between these two readings. But something to consider here: Paul is looking to maintain peace within the secular community "in this age." Don't rock the boat any more than you already have. Paul believes the Parousia (the second coming) is imminent (see 1 Thess 4:15-17), so there is no need to cause a ruckus by disrupting the status quo. This sounds vaguely familiar! **Provision: Rock the boat!** Jesus sure as heck disrupted the status quo. I know it seems easier to go along with the prevailing winds and ways and keep to ourselves. But rocking the boat doesn't have to be dramatic to bring about change. Rock the boat by standing up for someone oppressed, by calling out injustice, by demonstrating love by the way you live.

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**Wed, Nov 13:** *"They are to slander no one, to be peaceable, considerate, exercising all graciousness toward everyone"* (Ti 3:1-7). Say, now here's a novel idea! Instead of "living in malice and envy, hateful ourselves and hating one another," let's everyone try, just for today, to be considerate and gracious. **Provision: Be nice. Smile.** Especially if you don't feel like it today. Look for opportunities to encourage another, to bring about peace. Be nice to yourself. Try to replace negative self-talk. Commit to being a positive influence today.

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**Thu, Nov 14:** *"I am sending [Onesimus], that is, my own heart, back to you...no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a brother...So if you regard me as a partner, welcome him as you would me"* (PHMN 7-20). The back story here is complex, but it is assumed Onesimus was a servant or slave, and Philemon, his master. Onesimus either escaped from servitude or did his master some injustice. The point is Paul's interceding for this former slave, a changed man, and pleads with Philemon to receive him back, not as a slave but a brother. Paul is even willing to dig into his own pockets to make Philemon whole! **Provision: Be accepting.** Perhaps someone has hurt you and is trying to reconcile. Trusting that person can be tough and we are wise to be cautious, but let's open ourselves to the possibility of change. Or maybe you have the opportunity to help repair a breach in your family or community. Try not to take sides but be patient and supportive. Intercede for a return to love.

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**Fri, Nov 15:** *"Within my heart I treasure your promise"* (Ps 119:11). Hidden in Psalm 119, the longest psalm by far, are little gems like this one. **Provision: Meditate on these words.** Our hearts can get stuck, caught up by loss, sorrow, fear, apathy. As we approach the season of Advent and the fulfillment of God's promise, consider praying with these seven words. Use them for Lectio Divina to meditate on their meaning in your life, or as a mantra for contemplative prayer. Allow the peace of God's promise to open and heal your heart.

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**Sat, Nov 16:** *"Beloved, you are faithful in all you do for the brothers and sisters, especially for strangers; ...Please help them in a way worthy of God to continue their journey"* (3 Jn 5-8). John writes to Gaius about welcoming missionaries and supplying their needs as they continue their journeys. I think of the strangers Abraham welcomed in Genesis 18. I guess there's a risk in welcoming strangers, and yet, if we don't, we'll never hear the message they were sent to bring us. **Provision: Listen for the message.** What if we looked at others, not as strangers, but as missionaries, bringing to us some lesson or word we are to hear. What if we were willing to give them what they needed to continue their journey? Help a stranger today, in a way worthy of God.