



Come and See!

Week of November 17, 2024

The Word...

“But the wise shall shine brightly
like the splendor of the firmament,
and those who lead the many to justice
shall be like the stars forever”
(From Dn 12:1-3).

Pondering the Word...

In the Buddhist tradition there are individuals called “bodhisattvas,” which in Sanskrit means “enlightened being.” These individuals are thought to have reached the point of enlightenment but forego nirvana so they can lead other beings to the Light by continuing in the cycle of reincarnation. They are sometimes called the “saints” of Buddhism, and just like in Christianity, different sects of Buddhism have different lists of those who have attained this lofty stature.

For me personally, Thich Nhat Hanh and his teachings on love and peace (and his love of Jesus, as well) will continue to be a source of enlightenment, leading those willing to listen to justice by seeing that the Light of Love is one and the same. (His book, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* is wonderful if you are interested in building bridges between world religions.) The Christian mystics, both ancient and modern-day, see the true Light as well and continue to “shine brightly like stars forever” far beyond their earthly existence.

The Book of Daniel uses typical Western dualistic imagery: the good will live forever and the bad will experience “everlasting horror and disgrace.” But the wise, those who shine brightly, are the ones who understand the Light is not either/or but both/and (to use the words of Richard Rohr, a current mystic) and that in God’s good time, we will be led to the Light that shines for and on all of us.

Living the Word...

As we come to the end of the liturgical year, we will be reading from Daniel and Revelations with all the frightening images of apocalypse. These readings and discussions of mysticism can make our heads spin if we get too caught up trying to decipher the words or complex meanings or, worse, take the words literally. It’s simple actually: “Everything is a mystery, so nothing is a mystery.” God’s in charge. God is Light, God is Love and that love is for all beings and all of creation. Let’s strive this week to be “saints in the making,” to be a star shining, brightly alive with God’s love!

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Mon and Tue, Nov 18-19: *To the seven churches in Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea: grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come and from the seven spirits before his throne*" (Rv 1:1-3:22). The readings from Revelations today and tomorrow focus on Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea, but there are "revelations" given to all seven churches. For context, these churches were in Asia Minor with strong Greek and Roman influences, located on trade routes, and generally affluent. Several of these cities had sizeable Jewish populations. John depicts Jesus himself speaking directly to the churches:

Ephesus is commended for adherence to the faith, their works, and their wisdom in rejecting false prophets. But Jesus asks, "Where is the love you had at first? You are checking all the boxes, but it has become proforma." In Smyrna and Philadelphia, Jesus encourages and comforts the Christians. They were materially poor. These early communities were viewed by outsiders as a sect of Judaism and they encountered pushback from the Jewish elders, much like what Jesus experienced. A few were martyred. I wonder what Jesus would say to Christians today that demonize those of other denominations or those who practice other religions. I believe the Lord does not look kindly on how we have carved up his Body and his creation.

Pergamum and Thyatira struggle with how to assimilate into the prevailing culture with their Greek temples and, in the case of Thyatira, a false prophet. They are commended for their perseverance but warned to stay alert, to stay awake to the forces of evil lest they become indifferent and irrelevant, dying like the church in Sardis. The Christians in Laodicea want it both ways: to enjoy the riches of the culture but still say they are Christians. Jesus says they are lukewarm and "I will spit you out of my mouth" (the Greek word used is *emeo*, which means to vomit). "Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches." **Provision: Let's take a hard look at our faith.** Checkbox religion, works done out of obligation, not love; demonization of others who don't follow your same path; false prophets and the lure of riches; indifference, irrelevance. As we approach Advent, each of us and our churches ought to listen to what the Spirit is saying to us.

Wed, Nov 20: "*I, John, had a vision of an open door to heaven*" (Rv 4:1-11). Using the prayer practice of Lectio Divina with Revelations is tough. The images portrayed are beyond fantastical which is perhaps why the Spirit stopped me at "an open door to heaven." **Provision: What's your view of heaven?** The images beyond that open door are not of green pastures and restful waters. They are scary, frighteningly so, which is not what we need right now. The reality on earth is scary enough. I share these thoughts to invite you to join me in pondering what it means, what it takes to walk through that door and step inside. Do we have the courage and faith to endure the blinding light and all-seeing beasts, or do we choose to turn our backs on the door?

Thu, Nov 21: "*Jesus...wept over Jerusalem, "If this day you only knew what makes for peace"* (Lk 19:41-44). This passage appears every two years and Jesus' words sting more each time. The real problem is that we *do* know what makes for peace: "*There is no way to peace. Peace is the way*" (Rev. A.J. Muste). **Provision: Are you at peace?** "*Our capacity to make peace with another person and with the world depends very much on our capacity to make peace with ourselves*" (Thich Nhat Hanh). I am not at peace. I am exhausted. I am allowing the outside world to disrupt my faith, my patience, my soul. I again invite you to pray with me today. For peace for ourselves.

Fri, Nov 22: *I went to the angel and told him to give me the small scroll. He said, "Take and swallow it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth, it will taste as sweet as honey"* (Rv 10:8-11). There are likely stacks of doctoral dissertations about what words are written on this scroll. What would they be for you? **Provision: What "sweet" words from Jesus are hard for you to digest?** Loving my enemy? Carrying my cross? Giving up "my life" or my anxiety about the future? Take your words, digest them, and pray for enlightenment.

Sat, Nov 23 "*God is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to God, all are alive*" (Lk 20:27-40). What a great bookend for the week! To God, all are alive. No, this doesn't make sense in our dualistic way of looking at life, but God doesn't play by our rules. And the more we become wise in the ways of God, the more enlightened we become, the more loving we become, the greater our faith becomes. **Provision: Give thanks today for the "stars" in your life, those present with us and those who live in God's Spirit!**