



The Word...

“Brothers and sisters: Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”
(Rom 5:1-5)

Pondering the Word ...

Paul tells us we have peace and hope from the grace gained through faith in Christ and blessings of the Holy Spirit. He goes on to tell us grace is strengthened through our afflictions and our willingness to endure our afflictions, which in turn, build in us a stronger, more resilient character filled with hope.

Faith and the Spirit lead to Grace, and from Grace we have Peace. So if I'm not at peace, what am I missing?

Living the Word...

I need to look at the equation to see where I might be taking short cuts or even missing a step. As I do, I can see where I need some more work:

- Faith in Jesus: I claim it and, for the most part, I rely on Jesus in my own life, although (clue #1) I can't say I always believe Jesus will make all things new, particularly when it comes to the world and all its problems.
- The blessings of the Holy Spirit: I feel the Spirit's presence always, although (clue #2), I can fail to be aware of the blessing of that presence, particularly when it's wrapped in a difficult package, such as affliction.
- Grace: Oh, I always believe in God's grace, although (clue #3), I'm not sure I always have my grounding there. Do I stand firmly in the grace and the hope I claim to profess?
- Afflictions: I've not personally suffered much in my life. As Jesus tells the disciples, I "*pray that I will not be put to the test*" (Mt 26:41), and yet I wonder (clue #4): do I allow the world's afflictions to touch me deeply or have I grown numb? Do I reach out to accompany those who need support, and do I allow myself to feel their struggle? Do I try to fix or do I help others to build their own strength?

Does any of this resonate with you? Spend time in prayer looking for the clues that lead to your peace.

Personal Reflections and Ideas ... _____

Mon, Jun 13: *"Lord, listen to my groaning.At dawn I bring my plea expectantly before you."* (Ps 5)

Do you ever groan to God? Do you allow yourself that kind of intimacy? Some may feel more comfortable groaning to Mary or one of the saints, but I suggest you try going right to the source. Trust me. God can take it.

Reflection/Provision: It is unlikely that I am doing anything but sleeping at dawn, but this points to the importance of starting each day in prayer -- before you "doom scroll" or read the paper or watch the morning news. Consider this psalm. It is a great prayer during difficult times of sadness and violence, and with the proliferation of lies so prevalent in the public arena. *"All who take refuge in the Lord will be glad."*

Tue, Jun 14: *"For I acknowledge my offense, and my sin is before me always."* (Ps 51)

Yesterday, we brought our prayer "before" God. Today, we talk about our sin being "before" us always. If I persist in keeping my sin before me -- either by failing to confess, or, more likely, failing to forgive myself -- my prayer to God will be stilted. I, not God, set up a roadblock by keeping my sin before me rather than putting it behind me. **Reflection/Provision:** Are you holding on to past sins? Ashamed that you should have been "better than that?" Accept your humanity and your dependence on our ever-merciful God. Ask... groan if you can...to God to help you forgive yourself. Let go of the pride that keeps you from the freedom of mercy.

Wed, Jun 15: *"Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward."* (Mt 6:1-6, 16-18)

Jesus says the people who pray, give alms, or fast for the sake of recognition have received their reward. What is that reward? Anyone who struggles with poor self-esteem knows what Jesus means. That reward is the accolades, the approval of others. And those of us motivated by these kinds of rewards know how short-lived they really are. There is no reward on earth that can even come close to doing things solely for God.

Reflection/Provision: *"There is no greater pride than in seeking to humiliate ourselves beyond measure! And sometimes, there is no truer humility than to attempt great things for God."* (Abbé de Saint-Cyran) Consider today what motivates your prayer or good deeds. Is it obligation? Is it for others to see and praise you? Or is it for God's greater glory? You can attempt great things for God, even if they "fail." It is truly reward enough!

Thu, Jun 16: *"You were destined, in time to come...To turn back the hearts of fathers toward their sons."* (Sir 48:1-14)

I imagine most parents would claim their hearts are turned towards their children, even if their lived lives don't show it. Addiction, overwork, mental illness can get in the way. But I worry we do things we think will benefit our own children without taking into consideration the children of the world and the coming generations. Are our hearts turned toward the future? **Reflection/ Provision:** I really need to think about this. Our kids are grown, but what things have I done (and still do) to benefit us that will be a cost to pay tomorrow? Consider this question: What I am doing today to demonstrate my heart is turned to the future?

Fri, Jun 17: *"For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be."* (Mt 6: 19-23)

We've heard this passage about "our treasure" over the years, but there's an aspect we might fail to account for: our time, which some would say is their most valuable commodity. Our hearts may be with our treasure, but does our calendar reflect that? Are we so caught up in doing that we fail to just be with whatever it is we say we treasure? **Reflection/ Provision:** Look back at your calendar for this week. How much time have you spent cultivating a heart-filled connection with your treasure? Note: I did not say doing for your treasure. We can fall into the trap of doing out of deep insecurity about our ability to just be in connection with that which we treasure the most. This is food for deep reflection. Take this to God in prayer.

Sat, Jun 18: *"Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you."* (Mt 6:24-34)

Jesus talks earlier in this passage about "Solomon in all his splendor," and I am reminded of Solomon's answer to God in 1 Kgs 3:4-13: *"Give your servant an understanding heart."* Solomon asks for wisdom. We too should seek first the wisdom, the righteousness of God, and trust God will provide all we need. **Reflection/ Provision:** Your assignment for today: print out the text of this gospel reading. Highlight the verse that says, *"Can you by worrying add a single moment to your life?"* 😊 Don't just read this passage, pray with it. (If you are up for a challenging article that addresses the concepts of the two masters as it plays out in the US right now, read: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/serving-both-god-and-guns-and-banning-someone-eucharist>)