



The Word...

How long, O LORD? I cry for help but you do not listen!
I cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not intervene.
Why do you let me see ruin; why must I look at misery?
Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and clamorous discord.
Then the LORD answered me and said:
"Write down the vision clearly upon the tablet,... For the vision still has its
time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it,
it will surely come, it will not be late. The rash one has no integrity;
but the just one, because of faith, shall live."
(from Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4)

Pondering the Word ... *"the just one, because of faith, shall live."*

The book of the prophet Habakkuk is just three chapters long and worth the time to read and reflect upon. Many verses ring true to much of our current global reality, but the book also reminds us that "time" is a human construct. Psalm 90 tells us, "A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night" (v.4). It is wise to remember this when our cries for help and God's intervention seem to go unanswered.

Throughout the ages, prophets and faithful believers have lamented about the state of the world and the sinfulness of humanity. And none of us—none of us—know God's plans. But as we hear in later this week in Psalm 111, "God will ever be mindful of his covenant." The vision will surely come. God will not abandon us.

Because of faith, the just ones will live.

Living the Word...

There is little I can do to address the magnitude of the climate, political, and religious challenges that face the world, but there is much I can do to meet the challenges and needs I encounter every day. I can't let the scope of problems we are bombarded with daily cause me to become jaded and apathetic.

Two weeks ago, we talked about adopting the mantra, "It Matters!" The essence, the core of this mantra is our faith, our hope in the vision of Love, available to us right now. Pick one thing that speaks to you. Maybe it is the climate crisis or gun violence or religious intolerance; it could be estrangement among family or neighbors, homelessness, or prison reform and justice. Spend time with the Holy Spirit to discern a way to make a difference, however small, in your own family or community. "Stir into flame the gift of God that you have."

Spend time, not just money on your cause and don't make it a "one-off" thing; make a commitment to follow through on a regular basis. Join the committee at church focused on social justice issues. Choose something you can do with your kids. Commit to be kind every day to whomever you encounter, no exceptions. The Vision is here. Let us live justly to make the Vision real for ourselves and for all we meet.

Personal Reflections and Ideas ... _____

Mon, Oct 3: “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” (Lk 10:25-37). **Reflection/Provision:** I’m intrigued by Jesus’ second question to the scholar trying to test him: “How do you read it?” I am always impressed by how Jesus uses this technique with his disciples and those who challenge him. It is a form a rabbinical debate and an effective way of teaching. Rather than telling someone—or shouting—the answer, Jesus asks for their opinion. I wonder: might this be good way for us to dialogue across the political and religious divides prevalent today? It reminds me of an image earlier in Luke when Jesus, caught amid the riotous crowd from Nazareth ready to throw him off the cliff, “passed through the crowd and went on his way” (4:30). Bring Jesus, the wise teacher, into the midst of any debate in which you find yourself. Select some of Jesus’ words, then ask your counterpart: “How do you read it?”

Tue, Oct 4: “I did not immediately consult flesh and blood, nor go up to Jerusalem...: rather, I went into Arabia and then returned to Damascus” (Gal 1:13-24). After his conversion, Paul high-tails it out of Damascus for fear of...well, everybody. No one is quite sure if he is to be trusted, so he goes to Arabia. Why does he wait three years to confer with Peter? Paul seems like a take-charge kind of guy who doesn’t let much grass grow under his feet (not that there is much grass in Arabia anyway). So he tells us why: he chooses not to “consult flesh and blood.” He goes off to discern with the Holy Spirit. **Reflection/Provision:** When we experience a conversion or healing, we might be zealous and tempted to run right out and “do”—whatever—just do. But it might not be what God is calling us to do, so discernment is important. Sometimes, discernment comes through the “doing,” but it is wise to have a spiritual guide or trusted friend to help you sort things out. We will burn out if we don’t take time to ascertain God’s call. So...if you are feeling burnt-out...discern.

Wed, Oct 5: I said to Peter in front of all, “If you, though a Jew, are living like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (Gal 2:1-2, 7-14). Here’s my man, Peter—tenacious yet again! Paul, this rabble-rousing, “Johnnie-come-lately” calls Peter out for his hypocrisy: hiding the fact that he eats with Gentiles from the powers-that-be from Jerusalem. Peter is used to being called out—Jesus did it to him too. We don’t know how Peter reacted, but we do know he didn’t let Paul’s attack impact their shared mission. I like to think Peter, as always, humbly accepted the dressing-down and renewed his commitment to do better. **Reflection/Provision:** None of us like to be embarrassed in front of others, and if we are doing the calling out, it is always better to take someone aside. Sometimes, though, having our hypocrisy called out can educate others. If you find yourself in Peter’s shoes, accept the admonishment with humility.

Thu, Oct 6: “Did you receive the Spirit from works of the law or from faith in what you heard? Are you so stupid?” (Gal 3:1-5) Paul obviously did not read Dale Carnegie’s book, “How to Win Friends and Influence People”! I think Paul is most frustrated with the Jewish converts in Galatia who are trying to impose Jewish law and practices on the converts from paganism and with the resulting disunity. **Reflection/Provision:** There’s so much division in Christianity, past and present. I believe we will be judged harshly for how we have divided up the Body of Christ. Reflect on your faith and what it means: not doctrine, not beliefs, but faith. There is common ground. As expressed by John Paul II, let’s focus more on what unites us than divides us.

Fri, Oct 7: “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters” (Lk 11:15-26). There are three interpretations of the “whoever” is in this verse: Satan, the Pharisees, or the lukewarm followers of Jesus. But the real question is: are we gathering into one flock or scattering? **Reflection/ Provision:** This is a pertinent question to ask ourselves about those who lead us and about ourselves and how we relate to others. Is the message we hear preached by our ministers and politicians and the message we choose to live about unity, love, and inclusion? Or is it one that fosters division and exclusion? Think about it.

Sat, Oct 8: “Now that faith has come, we are no longer under [the law]” (Gal 3:22-29). **Reflection/Provision:** Go back to Monday’s reflection: “How do you read it?” I’ve heard people say it means they can continue to lie and cheat and sin because Jesus has already saved them! Sorry, but that is not what faith in Jesus means—at all! Faith means we live in love: for God, for others, for ourselves. We sacrifice what is pleasing to us for the sake of others and we accept God’s will for us, whatever it might be. Faith is a lived reality, not a checkbox approach to life or a done deal. And when we do fail, faith has us return to God with contrite hearts for God’s merciful embrace.