



# Come and See!

Week of July 9, 2023

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## The Word...

“See, your king shall come to you;  
a just savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass.  
He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem”  
*(from Zec 9:9-10).*

“I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,  
for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned  
you have revealed them to little ones. ...  
Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.  
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,  
for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves.  
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light”  
*(from Mt 11:25-30).*

## Pondering the Word ...

The readings today have a common message: God’s ways are not our ways, God’s thoughts are not our thoughts. Humanity seems unwilling to give up on the lust for power and control, be it through military might (horses and chariots), wisdom and learnedness, or by shouldering the heavy burden of the Law.

The meek and just savior who enters riding on an ass (typical of royalty at that time) comes to put an end to war and to bring peace. In the reading from Romans, we are reminded it is not our human lives that matter, but the indwelling of the Spirit in us. (Yes, we say that, but do we really believe it?)

And, in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus does what Jesus always does: he turns things upside down! It is to the simple, the “babes” —not to the highly educated and elite—that God reveals the mysteries of Heaven! He invites all of us to learn from him as he is “gentle and accommodating of heart.” (He understands and forgives us.)

Matthew’s Jewish audience would well have understood the concept of “the yoke,” the burden of Jewish Law. Jesus instead offers an easy path, one on which you will find rest.

*“The Lord is faithful in all his words”* (Ps 145). I wonder when we will begin to take them to heart.

## Living the Word...

I am so befuddled by Christians who see themselves at war with evil, as “soldiers for Christ.” I’m sorry but that is nothing but the lust for human power. My faith tells me that God—Love—is the only force that will defeat hate and evil. Violence—and not just physical violence—begets violence and is antithetical to anything Jesus teaches (see this Friday’s reflection for more on that). Spend time this week reflecting on Jesus’ teachings and contrast them with your own faith and life. Are you in “the flesh” or in “the Spirit?” Is Jesus’ yoke of love of God, self, and others heavy for you? Do you find rest with Jesus? If the Scripture you read and the prayers you pray don’t quite match up to how you are living, ask the Spirit for guidance to help you understand why.

## Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

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**Mon, Jul 10:** *Say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust" (Ps 91).* **Reflection/Provision:** Jewish scholar Robert Alter shares that Rabbi Yair Hoffman refers to Psalm 91 as an "amulet psalm." (*The Hebrew Bible, Vol 3, 2019*). Isn't that lovely? Of course, it is not meant as a good luck charm or a superstition, but as a prayer we can say when we feel the need for God's comfort and protection, or to praise and thank God for Divine providence. Christians may recognize this psalm as the basis for the hymn, "On Eagle's Wings," often sung at funerals. But how about for our every days as well: when we feel overwhelmed by life or setting out on an adventure—even if it's just driving to work or going to class! Keep this psalm in your wallet or on your phone. Remember in whom to place your trust.

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**Tue, Jul 11:** *"The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest" (Mt 9:32-38).* **Reflection/Provision:** Recently, the Southern Baptist Convention—the largest Protestant denomination in the US—made headlines by expelling congregations for having women pastors. One is among the largest congregations, and since then, another large congregation has left. I can't say much about this given my own denomination's view of women in leadership roles but it seems to me that, at a time when people are leaving churches in droves and many are dying on the vine due to a lack of the Spirit in their lives, we'd be looking for a lot more laborers for the harvest! What do you think Jesus—you know, the one who called into question so many meaningless rules—what do you think he might have to say about all this? Next Saturday, Catholics celebrate the Feast of St. Mary of Magdela, the Apostle to the Apostles. To revisit a quote we used last week: *"Don't look back. You're not going that way"* (Mary Engelbreit).

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**Wed, Jul 12:** *"Do not go into pagan territory or a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:1-7).* **Reflection/Provision:** So, just who are the lost sheep of Israel? Given Jesus' ministry thus far, I'd guess they are the "little ones": the poor and outcasts whose shepherds have led them astray. They are the ones who listen and believe. Or could it be that the lost sheep are the shepherds themselves who clearly do not see themselves as lost? Reflect on this today, especially if you tend to view your religion or nationality or economic status as superior to others. Could it be that we, the "wise and learned" are the ones that are lost?

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**Thu, Jul 13:** *"As you enter a house, wish it peace. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; if not, let your peace return to you. Whoever will not receive or listen to you—go outside and shake the dust from your feet" (Mt 10: 7-15).* **Reflection/Provision:** Jesus feels a sense of urgency to proclaim the Kingdom. He doesn't want the Apostles wasting time with those not receptive to the message. It seems harsh, but perhaps Jesus also wants the disciples to understand the success or failure of their mission is not up to them. It is the Spirit that opens the ears and hearts of those they meet. Remember this the next time you feel your message falls on deaf ears.

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**Fri, Jul 14:** *"Brother will hand over brother...and father his child; children will rise up against parents" (Mt 10:16-23).* **Reflection/Provision:** Jesus is not saying this is what he wants. When he says he did not come for peace but for the sword (Mt 10:34), it is not a call to arms. He just knows our human nature (Jn 2:24) and how often we want things "our way." I am so saddened when I read about families torn apart due to politics and religion—this is not what God intends. I wish I could say humanity has progressed since its tribal days, but alas, we know that is not the case. If you are estranged from family, friends, or community members for whatever reason, stop and reflect: Is it really worth it? What will matter in the end? Ask for the Spirit to grant you the grace of Pentecost: to dialogue in a language that all can understand.

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**Sat, Jul 15:** *But Joseph replied: "Have no fear....Even though you meant harm to me, God meant it for good" (Gen 49:29-32; 50:15-26).* Joseph's brothers—the ones who sold him into slavery and lied about it—now come up with another deception: telling Joseph that their father, Jacob, before he died, asked that Joseph forgive his brothers. (They were worried Joseph was holding a grudge.) Joseph sees God's hand in all that has transpired and forgives them. **Reflection/Provision:** When we have been deceived or wounded by another, it can be hard to find God in the hurt. What we fail to see is that God's hand is in the very act of forgiveness. It is a gift we give ourselves, even if we don't experience the reconciliation Joseph and his brothers achieved. If you are holding a grudge, even if it is for a grievous hurt, allow God's hand to heal you.