

Take Up Your Cross

Thought For The Week

June 22, 2014

Scriptures: Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16 • 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 • John 6:51-58

Anytime I read a magazine or newspaper the first place I look is the editorial section where I am assured that some very smart writers will comment on the state of the world as it appears to them on this particular day or weekend. I'll admit I don't always understand their dense oratory or their profound insights. However, one common element they all exhibit in their writings is a deep sense of hunger, a desire to know the meaning of life in this world and share it with those who have asked many of the same questions but often without satisfactory answers.

Some writers simply speak of their search for wisdom, others of the meaning of suffering and others will speak of the evident and real physical hunger that exists in this world on this very day. It's obvious that millions of people in this world are literally going hungry and have no way to satisfy their longing for food or even water.

The thought of that reality bothers me a lot because I personally do not experience the same hunger, nor do my friends and neighbors where we live. We generally eat well and never lack for a cold glass of iced tea.

As I think of it, like the writers I encounter, I come into my reading room with the same desire as theirs, to staunch my longing for a word of wisdom; for someone to tell me why life in the world happens to be the way it is on this particular day. Of course, most of these gifted writers that I encounter do not satisfy my search entirely, but they give me something to think about, a word that will stimulate my searching even further. In short, all that I have been writing about thus far has been about hunger, hunger in countless forms. It's part of our human condition to long for fulfillment: physical, mental, moral, spiritual, religious...human.

T.S. Eliot, the English poet, once said it best in this way: "We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time. This has been my experience too: we explore and explore and in the end we find ourselves where we started but always with a deeper insight and some human satisfaction.

Now, after all that, let's turn to the scriptures. The first reading comes from the book of Deuteronomy describing a situation where Moses is speaking to his people for the last time as they stand on the brink of entering the land of promise. In his wisdom Moses reminds them that they have never lacked for food in all their forty years of desert travel. Manna was their daily bread. Then he goes on to insist that it is not simply by manna alone on which humankind exists "but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God." In short, word is bread too.

I think we can assume, therefore, that every word that comes forth from the mouth of God can take on forms other than words: Many people, for instance, experience God in the beauty of the universe, in the scientific search for meaning in the planet; others experience God in the love of friend, husband, wife and children. In short, God speaks many languages, many tongues, many forms of human conversation and experience. It is our responsibility to listen to those words, whatever form they may take, and discern their meaning.

When we read the words of Jesus in the four gospels, it is evident that he spoke often about eating, about nourishment, about feeding others with bread and fish and with words of wisdom. In John's gospel, he goes even further; saying that he is "the living bread come down from heaven. "If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever."

The continuing faith of Christians is that Jesus is really and truly present in the sacramental signs of bread broken and the portion of wine poured out for us. Christ is truly the word of life and the bread of life lasting for all eternity.

Expanding on that doctrine of the Eucharist, we might suggest that if Christ feeds us with his body and blood, we should be expected to feed one another in human gestures of love, compassion, justice, and fraternity

Finally, let us say that, tragically, the hunger for sufficient food has existed on the planet for millions of years and may continue to exist. Nonetheless we all live in a common world where there is enough to go around if we make it go around.

Happy Birthday Sis!

Prayer Thought For The Week

We thank you, God, for all the blessings of this life. We thank you for friends, family, and those who give particular meaning to our lives.

We confess our shortcomings. In your compassion you forgive our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. We pray for the special concerns and needs of those gathered here this day.

We pray for the nations of the world, and in particular on this day the country and people of Brazil. May they use their resources for the good of all people. May we all learn to be wise stewards of the riches you have bestowed upon us.

Hear our prayer, O God. Today we offer ourselves as instruments of your peace. Amen.

Stewardship Thought For The Week

Mankind's "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again."

John 4:13

Jesus reminds us that, material things, even something as basic as water, can never satisfy us for long. When we build our lives around material possessions we always want more. True satisfaction only comes when we follow Jesus.

"Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

How often do we invest our time, talent and treasure in creating an appearance that does not matter at all to God? We strive to impress with our clothing, home, career, possessions, car and other marks of distinction. But none of these illusions of greatness will impress God. Instead, He will look into our hearts to see how much we loved Him, how much we loved others and how we showed that love by the way we used our time, talents and treasure here on earth.