



Confess our Impatience

Numbers 21:4–9

“Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

(Read the full Scripture Reference to understand the picture)

March 15, 2015

Thoughts for the Week

Scriptures: Exodus 20: 1-3, 8, 12-17 • Corinthians 1: 22-25 • John 2: 13-25

First of all, let me cite for you three quotes on holiness from Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel: each concerns the notion of holiness. These are very appropriate for consideration during Lent.

- Quote 1: “It is a sin to be sad on the Sabbath Day.”
- Quote 2: “The higher goal of spiritual living is not to amass a wealth of information, but to face sacred moments.”
- Quote 3: Spiritual life begins to decay when we fail to sense the grandeur of what is eternal in time.”

Any person who thinks deeply about life on this planet probably has the sense that holiness is all around us. It’s all a matter of discovering it: everything from the planet Neptune to the tiniest ant that happens to crawl on my sleeve. Part of that insight comes from the fact that all original matter where we live was not created by us but by the Lord of heaven and earth.

Our great shortcoming, however, is that we seldom take time to notice. We simply imagine that things are what they are, period. However, if we give some thought to life on this planet, there is something deeply spiritual, deeply supernatural about it; that’s simply the way things are; there is always more to imagine and dream about. In short, I can’t think of anything in this world that by its very nature is unholy unless we decide to consider it so.

So, as we think a little about holiness in today’s scriptures, we find that it covers the whole range of life itself: Honor God because God is the source of all being. Create no idols and pretend that they are holy (they are only pieces of art). Do not use God’s name casually. Keep the Sabbath holy because it is the one day of the week that belongs to God. Honor your father and mother; they gave you life. Do not kill; only God has the right over life and death. Do not practice adultery; sex, by its very nature is meant to bring life into existence. Do not steal from another; everything belongs to God. Do not malign the character of your neighbor; he/she is as precious in the mind of God as you are. Do not crave what belongs to others; there is enough to go around for everyone, or at least there should be.

So, there they are, the great commandments to which Jesus added: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Even if they had not been divinely inspired, one would have to say, they just make good sense in a world where we all need to live together in peace.

Finally speaking of holiness, we have the famous story in the gospel of the day Jesus “lost his temper.” It happened when he came into the temple to pray and found it practically impossible to do so because it resembled the NY Stock Exchange on a busy Monday morning. Jesus’ anger arose, as would ours, because the temple was dedicated to only one human action: prayer and the worship of God. In other words, the holiness of the temple derived not from its design or construction but because it was set-aside for prayer before the God of all creation, nothing more.

Of course, I would not suggest that we “clean up” our local church if we happened to notice someone from a charitable organization, standing in the vestibule, selling raffle tickets for a new Corvette convertible. Nonetheless, the building and all that make it a church, altar, Cross, the Holy Scriptures and all the rest are meant to help us concentrate on one purpose:

worship and prayer before our God.

Finally, it seems to me that the human sense of respect and our aesthetic appreciation of beauty are the two human elements that make all things holy. It just seems so natural, doesn't it? Holiness is all around us, just for the noticing.

Happy Birthday Rachel (17th) & Jim (16th)

Prayer Thought for the Week

God of all nations and all peoples, by whatever name they know you, we come with praise and thanksgiving.

Forgive our sins of selfishness and pride, we humbly ask. Guide us into the joy of being, and into the desire for joyful peace for all peoples.

We pray particularly for the people of Armenia this day. May they know you as the God of all nations and the Creator of all peoples.

We also pray for the needs and concerns of the people gathered here today. We ask your guidance as we try to live daily by your vision of shalom.

Hear our collective prayers, O Prince of Peace, that your peace may become the peace of this world. Amen.

Stewardship Thoughts for Lent

The forty days of Lent provide stewards with a marvelous opportunity to evaluate the nature of our life's "work." Being reminded to take a meaningful and substantive spiritual "pause" in our lives for forty days is a gift in itself. Sometimes, we have good intentions to improve our spiritual lives. But we tend to put it off. The season of Lent begins by reminding us of the brevity of our lives, and then presents us with the immediacy of forty days to focus more intensely on our life in Christ. This is the first step toward embracing Christian stewardship as a way of life.

It's a good number, forty days; good enough to provide structure to help us open our hearts to conversion as we examine just what our "work" in this world should genuinely be about. As we imagine what Jesus must have done in the desert for forty days, we have the opportunity to examine our lives and vocation, as well as our strengths, weaknesses and temptations.

As Christian stewards, we have a fundamental obligation to love and embrace the world as ambassadors of Christ. The season of Lent provides us with a singular opportunity to examine how well we're doing and to make an even greater commitment to exercising good stewardship of all the Lord has entrusted to us.