

T here is a special danger in persisting in our own ways, closing our eyes and ears, and running from the truth. We must be willing to come to God as He is, not as we wish Him to be. Somehow we must be willing to give up our own preferences and, yes, even our demands upon God. We need His grace and a heart of meekness to grasp this.

Thursday of the Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Exodus 19:1-2, 9-11, 16-20b

Daniel 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56

M atthew 13:10-17 Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" (11) And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. (12) For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (13) This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. (14) With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says: `You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. (15) For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them.' (16) But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. (17) Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

* **Meditation** by Edward Morse

“After the journey ... they pitched camp.” (Exodus 19:2) Pitching camp is something I enjoy. This summer we are preparing for another camping trip with my family in the mountains of Colorado . When backpacking in the high country, you have a lot of burdens to carry. Although we enjoy the journey, reaching the camp site and putting down those burdens at the end of the day is such a relief. Cool streams provide water for drinking and cooking, as well as for cooling feet tired from walking along the trail. Soon preparations occur for the evening meal. The food tastes good and the fire lights our faces and warms our hearts as darkness cloaks the mountains. It seems easy to sense God’s presence in this natural environment, as we enjoy the peace of the fire and the rest from the day.

I wonder if the Israelites had a similar experience when they pitched camp. They needed some reassurance after this exodus from Egypt – both in Moses’ leadership and that God was with them on the journey. God’s presence was concealed from the people in smoke and fire, which was undoubtedly more awesome and spectacular than the small fire in our mountain camp. But we later learn that God spoke to Moses directly, as with a friend. (See Exodus 33:11)

Today’s gospel message also suggests this paradoxical quality of revealing and concealing in the Lord’s teaching about parables. I sometimes discuss parables with my students as a means of exploring how we learn derivatively from the experiences of others. Rather than boldly stating a proposition, a parable requires reflection and illumination to unpack the significance of the details presented. Sometimes people see different things in the parables, just as in the cases that we discuss in class. Discussion and reflection adds a timeless richness to these stories, as

we grasp different dimensions of the characters and plumb the depths of their meaning.

But the gospel here also suggests that some are not granted insights into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Some close their eyes and ears. This is troubling, but we also see and experience evidence that bears out the truth of this mystery. We know the truth can be uncomfortable, and sometimes we may run from it for a time. Thankfully, we can come to our senses (like the Prodigal son) and we are drawn back to understanding. God is good. He sometimes allows us to taste the bitterness of our own ways.

I have heard people try to relieve themselves from discomfort by remaking God in their own image, saying "I would like to think of God as" But (thankfully) God is not so malleable. There is a special danger in persisting in our own ways, closing our eyes and ears, and running from the truth. We must be willing to come to God as He is, not as we wish Him to be. Somehow we must be willing to give up our own preferences and, yes, even our demands upon God. We need His grace and a heart of meekness to grasp this.

It is a precious gift to have our eyes and ears opened so that we may see and understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. May God help us not to take that gift for granted and to be attentive to the Word of Life which is graciously given to us, so that we may indeed dwell in this kingdom with our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Supplementary Reading

Big God

Written by Bobot Apit

Tuesday, 21 July 2009 02:53 - Last Updated Wednesday, 22 July 2009 19:25

{xtypo_quote} Then he got up, rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm. —
Matthew 8:26b {/xtypo_quote}

I was struggling during the latter part of 2007. I would have to spend my Christmas break with people I wasn't sure that I could face. I couldn't avoid them and yet I didn't know if I could forgive them enough to be civil. I wrestled long and hard about it. I asked for prayers, consulted my priest-friend and thought about it a lot. What these persons had done to me caused me trauma and pain in the past.

A few days before I was to leave for my vacation, I felt at peace. I was able to buy gifts for them. I could think of them without hurt and anger in my heart. The Lord had calmed the tempest within.

Anger, pain and unforgiveness can cause a raging storm to break inside our hearts. In the midst of all that, we wonder if the Lord is with us in our struggle. But I think the Lord appreciates that battle — the effort to follow His will and to become like Him by forgiving and loving. And when the time comes, He will calm the storm and give us the peace that our heart so desires. Joy Sosoban (Kerygma)

REFLECTION:

“Don't tell God how big your storm is. Tell the storm how big your God is.” (Anonymous)

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PRAY

as if everything depends on Him