

Monday, April 9, 2018

Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10

But Ahaz answered, "I will not ask. I will not tempt the Lord."

Isaiah 7:12

I can remember the words of wisdom that often came from the mouth of my mother or father: *"Be careful what you ask for..."* It might have been said when I complained that I wish I didn't have such a big family or I wish I was rich so I never had to think about money. And they would reply, *"Be careful what you ask for..."* King Ahaz's parents may have said the same thing to him because he is not so quick to ask even when the Lord invites him to in the first place.

Perhaps that is a lesson for us. Maybe we are just a little too quick to ask God for things. Maybe we are too quick to seek God's favor or blessing. Perhaps we would do well to not weary God with our requests and spend a little more time praising God for the blessings already received.

On this Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord maybe we would do well to reflect on all those announcements we have heard in our lives that came not because we asked but because God knew what we needed all along. And then give God thanks for the blessings that came from them.

Fr. Tom Clegg

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

Acts 4:32-37

The community of believers was of one heart and mind...

Isaiah 7:12

I LOL when I read that first line of Acts! I don't really remember a time when **my community of believers** was of one heart and one mind over anything. We can barely agree that Jesus is the Son of God and the second person of the Blessed Trinity.

I marvel at that description of the early Christian community in Acts and although we know that there was soon division and discord (see the very next chapter and the story of Ananias and Sapphira or the chapter after that and the Hellenist complaining their widows were being neglected or the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 or...you get the picture).

Nonetheless there must have been something pretty amazing about the way those Christians treated each other. The Gospel spread in part because of the way they lived their lives. People could see that something was different about them.

Do people see that there is something different about us? Do people see that there is something different about you?

Fr. Tom Clegg

Wednesday, April 11, 2018

John 3:16-21

God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

John 3:17

Most every Christian can tell you about John 3:16—"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but might have eternal life." But many fewer people can tell you what John 3:17 says: "God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

Pope Francis reminds us of this in Apostolic Exhortation: The Joy of the Gospel when he writes: *Now is the time to say to Jesus: "Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace". How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. (#3)*

It is precisely through the mercy of God that God has saved the world. It is in God's mercy that God shows love. May we never tire of seeking that mercy!

Fr. Tom Clegg

Thursday, April 12, 2018

Psalm 34:2 and 9, 17-18, 19-20

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; and those crushed in spirit he saves.

Psalm 34:19

In 2006, I almost left the priesthood. For a lot of different reasons I felt that God might be leading me away from the active ministry. I asked then Archbishop Daniel if I could take a month retreat to discern my future with the diocese. He granted me that permission. I spent that month under the spiritual direction of a wonderfully holy lay woman who walked with me on that journey.

My spirit at that time was broken. I was disillusioned with the hierarchy of the Church. I was disillusioned with my prayer life. I was disillusioned with God. And the first couple of weeks of that retreat all of those feelings grew worse.

I can't explain how it shifted. I can't explain what changed. But over the course of the last two weeks I began to feel God's presence ever stronger in my life. I began to know that God was with me in my pain, that God's saved my crushed spirit.

And in the last week, as I made the decision to continue in my ministry, I was struck by a passage in Mark's Gospel. The story is the healing of the Gerasene demoniac

(Chapter 5:1-20). After Jesus heals the man and casts out the demons, the man wants to follow Jesus. But Jesus tells him, "No...you go home to your family and friends and tell them all that the Lord in his mercy has done for you."

And so that is what I did and try to continue to do. God was near to me when I was brokenhearted and he restored my spirit to follow him both as a disciple and as an ordained priest.

Fr. Tom Clegg

Friday, April 13, 2018

Acts 5:34-42

If this endeavor or this activity is of human origin, it will destroy itself. But if it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them; you may even find yourself fighting against God.

Acts 5:38b-39

I love wisdom figures. Those people who always seem to know the right thing to say. It's Curly in *City Slickers* ("There's only one thing that really matters...and that's what you need to find out."), Glinda, the good witch, in *The Wizard of OZ* ("You don't need to be helped any longer. You've always had the power to go back to Kansas.") And it's Gamaliel in Acts of the Apostles.

So many times we get so caught up in trying to figure out if this activity or program or book is of God. Most of the time it is better off to leave it alone. If it is of God, we can't stop it. If it is not of God, it will die out on its own. Wise advice from a wise man. No wonder he was respected by ALL the people (5:34).

Who are those wisdom figures in your life?

Fr. Tom Clegg