

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Sep 16th 2015

We have seemingly disconnected passages today. This chapter of Paul's letter to Timothy contains advice on "how to behave in the household of God," which I think means how to act as part of this faith community, but possibly arising from the cultural norms that people observed at the time when they were guests of the head of the household. The real purpose of the passage is what follows – Paul reminds the believers they are members of the household of the living God, manifested by Jesus, and proclaimed to the world. Verses 1 – 13 contain guidance to Timothy that details the qualifications for ecclesiastical ministers but, while thought provoking reading, are beyond the reflection for today.

For me the focus today is the section from Luke. When I reflect on these passages, in 2015, they mean something much different to me than they might have meant to the author and listeners when they were written almost 2,000 years ago. "Children who sit in the marketplace and call to one another" evokes images of a Starbucks with people on their electronic devices, tapping away, oblivious to all that is going on around them. And the image I take from the statements these children might be making is that they (the people) judge Jesus (and John before him) not based on the truth contained in what Jesus and John actually were doing, but on what the people conveniently (shallowly) judged them to be doing.

These verses are a reminder to me to avoid shallow distractions. I most treasure mornings when I rise early and greet the day in prayer outside. Listening to the birds and insects awaken and become active, seeing the deer browsing in our yard, watching the turkeys fly down from their evening roosts in our tall trees, and feeling the gentle breezes move the branches, is a wonderfully peaceful time. Waiting with anticipation for the sun to pop over the horizon, perhaps coloring puffy clouds with multiple shades of red, orange and crimson, adds to these special moments. I find myself able to clearly and more directly listen to God when I can feel part of, fundamentally at one with, God's awesome creation.

Then I imagined I was out one morning with my iPad as I greeted the day. The dawn was coming but the stars were still out, and I was curious so I used an app to identify the names of Orion's belt. I wondered when the sun would come up, so I checked the solar tables (after adjusting for our longitude and latitude using the GPS function) for the exact time it would rise, knowing that (since we are in a small valley) I would not actually see it rise at that precise time. I felt a chilly breeze, so I found out it was 54 degrees F. The birds were clamoring, and I wondered about a particular call, so I checked a birdcall web site to identify the Baltimore Oriole that I heard. Several different varieties of bees were visiting flowers, and so I checked to see that they were both ground bees and honey bees feasting on the flowers of the *Echinacea purpurea* and *Nepeta racemosa* that I had planted a year or two ago. I thought I would enhance the experience so I searched my iTunes library for Ferde Grofe's "Sunrise" from his "Grand Canyon Suite." I finally found it and started the music, and then I realized the sun had come up and I missed it. My curiosity had been satisfied as my mind had wandered, but since I

was so busy with the iPad I missed the very reason I went outside in the first place!

I really do enjoy those sunrises, and I would never take my iPad out to “enhance” the experience. But I think we are so tempted today to use our ubiquitous technology for all things to make our lives better that we are like those people 2,000 years ago in the marketplace, calling to one another and judging what happens around us from the perspective of our digital devices, not being fully aware of what in fact is before us. We equate reality with artificial things instead of opening ourselves to the true experience of being alive in this beautiful gift from our loving God. We try to force our understanding of Jesus and His message into our preconceptions, instead of listening quietly and allowing the message He sends to resonate in our innermost being.

And don't misunderstand – I am grateful to Andy and Maureen for using awesome technology to create this wonderful service for all our users and suspect some of you are accessing this reflection on your own iPhone!!

And so my prayer today is for the grace of quietness, of letting go of shallowness so I can more fully embrace the exquisite greatness of the works of God.

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