

JUST ANOTHER DAY?

John the Baptist must have had a lump in his throat as he saw Jesus coming his way, for this is why John came into the world—to prepare Israel to receive the fulfillment of God’s covenant, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Born by the grace of God to parents well beyond their childbearing years and given a name and a mission by God himself through the message of the angel Gabriel, John the Baptist dedicated his entire life to “turn the hearts of parents to children, to turn the disobedient to the understanding of the upright, and to make ready a people fit for the Lord”. ^(Luke 1:17) Now the young prophet who came in the spirit and power of Elijah fulfills this calling as he testifies that this man, Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, is the very Son of God.

Behold, John said as Jesus approached. Behold this man who is coming. As the blood of the lamb of Exodus spared Israel death in Egypt, so this man will save us from eternal death and free us from the slavery of sin. (cf. Exodus 12:11–13).

Behold the time of Passover is near. It has been suggested that even as John the Baptist saw Jesus coming, flocks of lambs were being driven up to Jerusalem to serve as sacrifices for the Passover Feast. The “Lamb of God” will perfectly fulfill the promise of the Old Covenant’s “lamb without blemish”.

Behold the lamb of Revelation. The phrase “Lamb of God” haunted the writer of Revelation. Twenty-nine times he used it. It becomes one of the most precious titles of Jesus. This one phrase sums up the love, the sacrifice, the suffering and the triumph of Jesus.

Past, present and future all converge upon this man Jesus as John the Baptist proclaims: Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Behold—a word that stops us in our tracks. Behold—gives no time to dwell on our past, no time to worry about the future; just time to see and to hear, and be in the eternal presence of the one who is beyond all time. This is where we find Jesus—in the here and now—in the eternal present. This is where we behold Jesus, the Son of God.

As Christians it is important to know our past. That is how we make sense of the present. It is important to know our future. That is how we find the courage to carry on in times of trouble. But, it is most important to be awake to this moment right here and now or we will surely miss the blessing that God has for us this day.

Benedictine monk, spiritual author and lecturer, Brother David Steindl-Rast gives us this fascinating reflection on living in the moment—with gratitude.

You think this is just another day in your life – it’s not just another day. It’s the one day that is given to you today. It’s given to you. It’s a gift. It’s the only gift that you have right now, and the only appropriate response is gratefulness.

If you do nothing else but to cultivate that response to the great gift that this unique day is, if you learn to respond as if it were the first day in your life, and the very last day, then you will have spent this day very well.

Begin by opening your eyes and be surprised that you have eyes you can open, that incredible array of colors that is constantly offered to us for pure enjoyment . . .

Look at the faces of people whom you meet. Each one has an incredible story behind their face, a story that you could never fully fathom, not only their own story, but the story of their ancestors. We all go back so far. And in this present moment on this day all the people you meet, all that life from generations and from so many places all over the world, flows together and meets you here like a life-giving water, if you only open your heart and drink . .

And so I wish for you that you would open your heart to all these blessings and let them flow through you, that everyone whom you will meet on this day will be blessed by you; just by your eyes, by your smile, by your touch — just by your presence. Let the gratefulness overflow into blessing all around you, and then it will really be a good day.

Brother David Steindl-Rast

So, cultivate that response to the great gift that this unique day is. Open your heart to the words we speak as we pray Our Father... thy kingdom come... give us this day our daily bread... forgive us our trespasses. At the sign of peace, look your neighbor straight in the eye, and give thanks for the blessing that you are to each other, for we are the Body of Christ. Be awake to the word of God as Father stands in the person of Jesus and elevates the bread and the wine while speaking the words of God once spoken by John the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sin of the world.”

Be present to that. Do not think about the mistakes of the past nor worry about the future because if you do, you will surely miss the blessings that God has for you today. Allow Jesus to set you free right now. Free to be open to the love he has for you.

Do you have someone in your life that made a difference for you or someone that opened your eyes in some important way—maybe your father or mother, grandfather or grandmother, an uncle or aunt—someone that changed the way that you think just by being there? Maybe a teacher, who helped you to discover your hidden talents, or a coach who taught more than how to be good in your sport. Or maybe a spouse that made of you a family and taught you how to love in ways that you never thought possible. Or maybe a child...

Just last Thursday evening Boy Scout Leader Dan Carlisle and I interviewed the boys who were seeking the Life of Christ and the Parvuli Dei religious metals.

One of the exercises the young Scouts do is to compose a prayer thanking God for all the gifts that he has given them. Often we ask them to read their prayer to us as we go through the exercise in the workbook. Believe me when I say that as we listen, some of the adults in the room have to dry their eyes. Their prayers are so beautiful.

When we heard Quinn Margrett's prayer last Thursday night, I told him it would be a good ending for the homily that I am giving this weekend. Quinn's dad quickly offered to tear out that page in the book and give it to me. So being awake to the here and now, and not wanting to test the Holy Spirit that was with us that evening, I give it to you:

Dear Father in heaven, thank you for the sun and the warmth it gives us. Thank you for all the plants and the things they give us. Thank you for the water and the life it has. Thank you for the air that the plants give us, and thank you for all the animals. We thank you for all the gifts you give us. Amen.

I would add, Thank you Quinn for the gift that you are to your parents and to us here today. Like John the Baptist, you have "turned the hearts of parents to children".

Has someone made a difference in your life? Be that someone special to another this day. You don't have to be anyone special to do that. Or maybe I have that backwards. The truth is that you become someone special—when you open your heart to becoming that special someone to another. Let your gratefulness overflow into blessing all around you, and then it will really be a good day.

Deacon Alan Christy
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