

## A Spirit Filled Life

Wayne Waibel – 01/14/2024

Today marks the second Sunday after Epiphany. Tomorrow, we celebrate the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Tuesday begins the epic journey from campaign for to election of the President in this nation of ours. Busy week.

All of these activities usually transpire with a minimum of attention in the ebb and flow of ordinary time, but these are anything but ordinary times. Instead of imploring our neighbor to “come and see” as Philip did Nathanael, conventional wisdom beckons us to brace for impact.

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This seems to be a good time for us to acknowledge a couple of simple truths. Samuel reminds us that God has plans to do good things, and Paul reminds us that activities that do not glorify God - skew life.

Let’s start with Paul, who was writing to his church in Corinth. What was happening there was remarkably similar to what transpires all over the globe in every span of history.

His people were entrenched in the worship of self. And Paul was being very deliberate in his efforts to steer them away from their unrighteous tendencies and back toward a Spirit filled life.

What often happens in that kind of an effort is a return to doctrine, and doctrinal preaching is duller than dull, especially when tediously lectured on by someone trying not to fall asleep before the audience does.

Paul, however, firmly grasps that all scripture derives from some life experience. So, he intertwines the realities of the ancient world with the Word of God – bringing the scripture to life, and raising the level of relevance to a point readily accepted by his contemporaries.

Samuel, on the other hand, was a boy on the threshold of becoming a king maker for the children of Israel. Eli had failed to arrest and reverse the many transgressions of his sons who had completely undermined the efforts of the priesthood to rule, so God Himself was about to intercede by using young Samuel to work the problem.

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I know it's very difficult during these bleak days, but take a moment and try to think back to your youth – I realize that for some of us that is a long journey.

In attempting that leap backward, try to imagine a world of enchantment. Where each day was filled with wonder and discovery. A world of puppies and grasshoppers and ice cream and swing sets and pals. That is the world God intends for us.

And what we face now as a nation is not all that different from our brethren in first century Palestine. Even when confronted by the Divine, it is possible for people to be oblivious to God's presence in their life, because individualism has been raised to the level of divinity in this country.

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So the rancor and discord can go ahead and have its day. Ultimately goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. God's greatness exceeds what we have already seen, and what we can imagine.

The beauty of scripture lies in its absolute truth. As in the time of Samuel, the word of the Lord is rare in these days as well, and there is no widespread revelation. But unlike Samuel, we know that our redeemer lives.

And even though Nathanael had no context when Philip bid him “come and see,” at the end of chapter one – we have the beginning of the fourth gospel to fall back on - and are keenly aware of the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us.

Even Jesus, though utterly Spirit-filled and completely in tune with God’s will, had to sort out his options and make his own decisions.

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Jesus can read people’s hearts. That in itself was enough for Nathanael to proclaim, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel!” Prompting Jesus to respond, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.”

It’s not enough to believe in Jesus. Discipleship consists in following Him. In walking with Jesus, we learn who He is. As we learn who He is, we learn what it means to follow Him.

And it all starts by paying no regard to those things which do not glorify God. We can choose to get whipped up over what passes for news these days, or we can see them for what they are and what they are not – reject them – and move on with our day – minus the anxiety.

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for such is the kingdom of heaven.” If our adult mind finds it difficult to wrap our head around what currently takes place in the halls of government, we can be reconciled to the specific treasure that occupied our youth. For where our treasure is – there will our heart be also. Amen.