

# Easter 3, 2020

## The Daily Reading of Scripture

John 14:1-4

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As I listen to great teachings, such as we heard from Fr. Chris last Sunday and as I continue in my own personal readings and meditations on Holy Scripture, I find myself enlightened to the obvious conclusion that it is in the **listening** to the Word of God expounded combined with the daily **reading** of Holy Scripture that leads us from the milk of understanding to the meatier depths of God's truths. Applying what we understand today moves us more fully into the Will of God where mustard seeds can move mountains.

With so much on our minds these days concerning the Corona Virus, I would like to bring our attention to an often overlooked and neglected privilege that we have been given. It is nothing less than the daily reading of our Holy Scriptures. It is in the daily routine of scripture reading where we find our hearts moved and our minds renewed to the reality of God with us. Have you ever stopped to think how blest we are to have the word of God in a book and a lineage of theologians and preachers to guide us in our studies?

The understanding of God's word is a process that takes time and even so, there are depths so deep that even a lifetime of continued commitment to such an endeavor would never grasp the fullness of God's love. Even Philip, who had walked in the flesh with Jesus, failed to grasp the divinity of God in his presence. *"Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"*

Philip was at the Lord's feet...he was listening to every word! The desire to understand the divine is a great step of faith. So, how are we, on this side of the resurrection, to come to terms with the depths of a human messiah, a human savior...the Divine God in flesh and blood, when even Philip, who looked into the very eyes of Jesus, failed to grasp the reality

of who He truly was? The answer is found in what God has left to our benefit; the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the divinely written word of God.

In the first book of Homilies referred to in the 39 Articles of Religion we read this, *“Unto a Christian man, there can be nothing either more necessary, or more profitable, than the knowledge of holy Scripture...”* A powerful statement, written approximately 500 years ago. And when we consider that the scriptures were written by the divine influence of the Holy Spirit we can see the scriptures as our life-line to a right understanding of our relationship with our Father in Heaven.

And considering our separation in these pandemic times, it is a tribute to our faith that we have found a way to come together in worship, to read, mark and to learn holy Writ. We have proven our resolve to stay united within the care and love of the Almighty by coming together to share his most holy Word. To the believer, God’s word is sweet with the promises of hope and love. To the believer the holy Scriptures contain direction for lives well lived; what we ought to do, what we ought to avoid, what we should believe and how to love our brethren properly. In the Holy Scriptures God offers all that is needed for anyone, in any place, at any time. St. Chrysostom related this sediment most perfectly when he said:

*“Whatsoever is required to salvation of man, is fully contained in the Scripture of God. He that is ignorant may there learn, and have knowledge. He that is hardhearted, and an obstinate sinner, shall there find eternal torments, prepared of God’s justice, to make him afraid, and to mollify him. He that is oppressed with misery in this world, shall there find relief, in the promises of eternal life, to his great consolation and comfort. He that is wounded by the devil unto death, shall find there medicine, whereby he may be restored again unto health.”*

The words of Holy Scripture are words of everlasting life found in the love and sacrifice of God and have the power to convert the darkened soul, to give hope to all who hear the call and respond. The promises given therein, received by a faithful heart, are all that is required for a sinner to overcome the world. It is the effectual workings of the Holy Spirit within heart, through the reading of Holy Scripture that will

destroy the desire for the transitory things of this world. Life is a vapor and beyond it lies eternity...eternity on one side of the gulf or the other. It is through the very words of God, divinely given, that you will come to know your Father in Heaven and be set apart for His glory. When His word becomes so a part of you that your very nature no longer glories in the worldly hold of sin, but in the very words of God imprinted on your mind, then will you be able to beat down Satan under your feet. The transforming of your mind is the work of the Holy Spirit through the proper digesting of God's word!

But, I feel that there are many professing Christians who cannot boast a conviction to the regular reading of Scripture. I will not approach those who feel that they know God intimately without the need of God's written word. They have made their bed so comfortable that they do not see the scorpions crawling up the rails. The danger here is to create God in your own image. But as for those who shy from daily reading for fear of lack of understanding and error let me give you hope. Neither ignorance nor difficulty in the understanding of God's word is reason to fall away.

In Matthew 22:29-34 Jesus is confronted by the Sadducees who are trying to trick him, *"Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God"* (Matthew 22:24-29).

This proves the point. Error in understanding does not come from reading scripture but from not reading the scriptures. Even the wisest preacher you know was at first ignorant. It was only through the daily digestion of the word of God that they were able to attain their present level of knowledge; *"He that now hath most knowledge, was at the first ignorant."*

So, how does one attempt the reading of Holy Scripture without fear of error? *“Read it humbly, with a meek and lowly heart, to the intent that you may glorify God and not yourself.”* St. Augustine is quoted as saying, *“The knowledge of Holy Scripture is a great, large, and a high palace, but the door is very low; so that the high and arrogant man cannot run in, but he must stoop low, and humble himself.”* It is the humble gleaner of truth that need not fear missing the door, for humility will only search to know the truth. Therefore the humble man may search any truth boldly in the scripture, without any danger of error.

The Lord asked Philip, “have I been with you for so long a time and yet you do not know me?” Philip could reach out and touch Jesus, he could hear his very words. As wonderful as that may seem we can boast and even greater proximity with our Lord for we have the Holy Spirit of God and his Word is in his children.

Approach scripture daily, explore the simple valleys and plains and soon you will find that you are able to reach higher peaks and look over the fertile ground that has formed you as a true child of God. No matter what it takes, be persistent...read, pray, ask questions of your brethren, continue to knock and the doors will be open to the glory of God.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.