

April 1, 2020
Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent
JOHN 8:31-42

Activity for today:

- Read Today's Readings
- Fr. Brian's Gospel Reflection
- Prayer of the Day
- Task for the Day
- "Purpose of Tap" YouTube Video

Fr. Brian's Gospel Reflection

Reflection John 8:31-42 Jesus, Abraham or Moses: Whose Word?

A couple of years ago in a jail ministry session, after I had given a message and was leading a prayer group with some inmates, one of the prisoners told me, "***I have to stay in the word of Jesus*** here or I'll lose my way". The phrase '***stay in His Word***' stuck with me, as a great description of being faithful about reading, studying, sharing and repeating to myself what God says in the scriptures. Jesus tells us in John 8:31 "If you ***remain in my word***, you will truly be my disciples..." '***Remain in my word***' is a phrase Jesus returns to in John chapter 15 in his sermon at the Last Supper. There are a lot of 'remains' (not reruns) served at John's ***Last Supper*** account! John uses the Greek word for 'remain-abide' 13 times in his gospel (John uses the Greek word for 'word' even more-45 times). Eleven of the thirteen times that John uses 'remain' are found in this one chapter John 15. In that John 15:7, Jesus says, "If you remain in me and ***my words remain in you***, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you." I understand Jesus to mean that if we live under His guiding word, following the direction of His word, repeating His words, memorizing His words and even singing His words, then we will be safe, have life, grow and bear fruit. I think of it like a person who loves someone and keeps rereading old love letters or notes as comfort from and for connection to the other person. Maybe that is why people inscribe words on their walls, on pendants or rings, or even on their own bodies (if you know what I mean). The ever-present words of their loved one 'around and over them' are their life's motivation and meaning. This is what Jesus is talking about as to '***remain in my word***'. The prisoner in jail that day was telling me that his protection and purpose was knowing and living every word that Jesus told him. This idea of 'living in or under the Word of God' is found in the very first chapter of John's gospel. That chapter suggests that the 'Word' is a house we can shelter in. For example, in John 1:14 we hear the popular verse 'And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us'. If we really have life, then ***Jesus is the 'Word House' we live in***. Jesus confirms this in today's gospel John 8:37 when He says to His opponents who do not know or care to know Him, "you are trying to kill me, because my word has ***no room among you***." They fire back at Jesus claiming to be saved and righteous because they know or live under Abraham's word (John 8:39). This excuse is similar to some other Pharisees who later claim to be justified in rejecting Jesus because 'We are disciples of Moses' (John 9:28). Both groups were claiming against Jesus that 'we remain in Moses' or in Abraham's word'. And what happens, but they try to kill 'life itself' (Jesus is the resurrection and life' Jn 11:25).

I like how Jesus responds to both excuses from His attackers. He points out that if they really knew Moses or Abraham and truly lived justly, imitating how those two ancestors lived, then they would not be plotting against Him. It is remarkable sometimes how we human beings will cling to the craziest prejudices because of where we stand or where we live (seeing things only from our own house). The opponents of Jesus felt justified in their evil designs, and used Moses and Abraham as support. We can easily enough fall into such an error, too, justifying some sin of our own by distorting or misinterpreting someone else's words. The solution is to 1) simply know and 2) know well what it is we are talking about-Jesus. This is what He means by telling us, 'Remain in my word'. Stay close to it and don't deviate from it. Stay at home with Jesus, and make His Word your sheltering place!

Prayer for the day

Dear Lord, I believe that You uphold the creation by the strength of Your mighty power and Your great wisdom, and that in Your Word You have laid out all that we need to live good lives that are pleasing to You. I want to do Your will and serve You in the manner that You desire. Help me to live each day of my life in holiness, humility of heart and with self-control. Help me to walk in truth and to do only those things that I have heard from You, through your Word and the gentle promptings of Your Holy Spirit within me. May I look to You and not to the world, for approval. May I grow in knowledge of You, and apply myself diligently to pursue Your greater purpose in my life. I willingly accept correction and wish to be eager to forgive others and enjoying your friendship always. In Jesus' name, I pray Amen.

Task-Challenge for the Day:

Look up and memorize a scripture verse today. Repeat it to yourself often throughout the day (7x). Try one of these to address specific emotions:

Guilt or shame....	Psalm 51:10
Loneliness....	Deuteronomy 31:8
Distant from God....	James 4:8
Spiritually bored....	Psalm 42:1-2
Prideful....	Philippians 2:3-4
Fearful....	Psalm 46:1-2
Tired....	Matthew 11:28
Impatient....	Psalm 27:14
Hopeless....	Romans 15:13
Happiness....	Psalm 100:1-2

Purpose of Tap Video with Jeff Foxworthy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nf1K6uP6s0I&t=25s>