

## THE POWER OF WORDS

I have always found it rather fascinating that Jesus himself never wrote anything down to leave for posterity. To my way of thinking if he had there would be this clear, reliable, unmistakable source for us to rely upon. But by not writing anything down all we have left are reports that come from different eye witnesses and ear-witnesses and some after-the-fact witnesses such as Mary Magdalen and the disciples on the road to Emmaus. But as I think more about this little factoid it becomes clear that Jesus didn't write anything down on purpose. He knows he could have but doing so would eliminate a crucial part of what he was trying to achieve.

His purpose was to restore the creation begun by his Father and to renew the face of the earth. Thus, he brought forgiveness and a wonderful healing power and he put them to use. He then began to teach people the real way to live in this life. Jesus knows of course that he is leaving it up to each person to choose to believe in him or not, to accept his way of life or not, to put their faith in him or not. Jesus knows that the original sin of our first parents was a sin of lack of faith, lack of trust. God set up everything for them and surrounded them with all they needed. Not all they might want mind you, but all they needed. God even pointed out their limitations and asked them to go along with and accept those limitations. "Do not eat of the fruit of that tree lest you die." "Trust me," God is saying. "Put your belief in me, your trust in me," God is saying. And they chose not to do so. It cost them—and us—everything. They were cast out of that garden, cut off from the one tree that truly gives life. And once cut off from the tree of life, all hell breaks loose, literally, figuratively and spiritually.

God's word has always been. God spoke his original word from all eternity and then in the first creation. God speaks his word again although this time God's Word actually becomes flesh. God's Word becomes humanly real, one of us. And that Word invites—afresh—each human being to live the way the first human beings were invited to live. But it is more difficult now because there is sin on our world and in our hearts and there is a pull in the heart of us over to the dark side or the selfish side or the mean-spirited side or the "I don't care" side of things. Still Jesus speaks his word of invitation. "Come follow me." "Come to me all you who labor and are weary and I will give you rest." Jesus does more than invite us however. He empowers us. He doles out a share of his very own Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God. That Spirit lives in us and we are attuned to that Spirit.

Jesus, as God's Word, continues to speak to us but not directly. Through others. Take Saint Luke in the gospel today. He writes his Gospel because a wealthy Christian patron chooses to underwrite the cost of the endeavor and Luke will have money to live on while he researches and writes his account. Luke did not hear or see all that he will write about. He will rely on those who did. And they will give their testimony. They will tell the truth of their story. They will share with him what they

have come to believe. Jesus could have left his own account but he wants us to step forward and profess what we have come to believe and others, hearing us, will hopefully decide to put their faith in Christ too. The witness value of believing people is a fundamental part of God's plan. So Jesus doesn't write things down but instead invites us, who believe, to give our best explanation and testament so that God does not overpower with the beauty of his truth but that we will come to believe because we have met and observed others who believe. Their faith makes a difference in our lives and prompts us to take the step to follow Christ. The word of the speaker and the speaker himself or herself are two legs but the third is me the hearer. Do I truly listen? Do I make sure that I hear the Lord speak? Do I welcome that word, making room for it in my heart? God's way is designed to get us to deepen our faith and our trust. Without that happening, there can be no new creation. The Lord still wants you and me to be part of his great adventure—creation and freedom.