

Hello everyone! And welcome to our Wednesday Word devotion for today, January 27, 2021. Thank you so much for tuning in, and for taking this time out of your day to focus on God and focus on your faith.

You know how sometimes certain patterns of things keep popping up in unexpected ways, and the pattern is too noticeable to ignore? Like, maybe the Holy Spirit is trying to nudge you in a certain direction, but you need really real signs to point and guide you toward that particular direction?

Lately, for me, the pattern that keeps popping up is a pattern of prayers written by the ancient church leaders, mystics, theologians, saints. In so many of my meetings, in my meditation moments, it's just been words and phrases and prayers of the ancients that have been ringing something deep and true within me. It's like the Spirit is saying, hey, things are really tough right now, but you're going to make it. Look at the thousands of years of human history and faithful people that have survived to bring you here and now. God is faithful to God's beloved people, and you are counted in that family of beloved people. Look to these ancients, and hear the truth that has been preached and prayed and proclaimed for hundreds of generations.

Well, alright Holy Spirit, let's do this! So for today's devotion, I want to share with you a prayer that's attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, who many of us remember as a saint who dearly loved animals and the created world. His prayer speaks to so much of what the beloved human experience is, and the prayer helps to ground us in that created belovedness. So I'll pray these words with you, share some scripture and a few more thoughts, and end again with this prayer.

So let us pray these words from St. Francis of Assisi:

*Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.*

And now a reading from 1 Corinthians 12:4-11:

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.*

The Word of the Lord.

What unites these verses of scripture with this gorgeous prayer from St. Francis is the reliance on God or the Spirit's action to bring about these desired qualities of being human, or the human experience. It's the reliance on God and the Holy Spirit. Paul, who wrote 1 Corinthians had a huge, revelatory, life-changing, world-spinning, total life pivot when God acted in his life, and from that time on, he absolutely relied on the calling of God and the Holy Spirit to guide his way. That deep reliance did not necessarily lead to an easy life, but it led to one with deep meaning, calling, joy, relationships, all these things that we so often search for in the world itself. What if we searched in God's work, searched in the Spirit's movement, searched in the power of creation, to find our deep calling, meaning, joy, and relationships? What would giving up our grieving hearts and spinning minds to our God, Lord, Savior Jesus Christ mean for our needed newness of life?

Both this prayer and this scripture bring up qualities of what the human experience, the human life is, and how often we have to embrace a wide range of things - hatred, love, injury, pardon, discord, union, doubt, faith, despair, hope, sadness, joy, knowledge, wisdom, healing, miracles, prophecy, all these things are activated and come about with God. So, giving up our own expectations and instead relying on what God actually is, and what the Spirit actually does, does not mean we are without the frustrating or deeply sad or disorienting things, but it does mean we're not alone. It means we have within us and around us the power of creation itself, the power that brings new life to us every single day in the promises of our baptism. It means that we receive the gifts of God by the power of the Holy Spirit every day, and our deep need to rely on God for what seems impossible truly is possible with the one who created and loves us. Let's be at peace with letting go and letting God - this doesn't mean a lack of action, but rather action inspired by the Spirit, inspired by our God-given gifts, inspired by the Living Word, the scriptures, which are God's word revealed to us. Only by relying on our God of love and grace and mercy and truth and healing will we be able to be this world's sorely-needed instruments of peace.

And now please join me in praying St. Francis' words again:

*Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.*

Thanks so much for tuning in! Have a beautiful rest of your day, God is with you. Amen.