

Convent 2016

Bible Sunday Luke 4 16 - 24

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim.)

The requirement in our reading of Scripture is that it should be Christ-centered. “Scriptures constitute a coherent whole,” but, where are we to locate their wholeness and coherence? It is located **In the person of Christ**. He is the unifying thread, that runs through the entirety of the Bible from the first sentence to the last. Jesus meets us on every page. All Scripture ties up because of Him, “In Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17NRSV).

According to Saint Mark the Monk who lived in the fifth century, “The person who is humble in his thoughts, and engaged in spiritual work, when he reads the Holy Scriptures, will apply everything to himself, and not to his neighbour.” We are to look throughout Scripture for a personal application. Our question is not simply “What does it mean?” but, “What does it mean for me?” Scripture is a direct, intimate dialogue, between the Saviour and myself - Christ addressing me, and my heart responding.

I am to see all the narratives in Scripture as part of my own personal story. The description of Adam’s fall is equally an account of something in my own experience. Who is Adam? His name means simply “man,” “human”: it is I who am Adam. It is to me that God says, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9). We often ask, “Where is God?” But the real question is the one that God puts to the Adam in each one of us: “Where are you?”

Who is Cain, the murderer of his brother? It is I. God's challenge, "Where is Abel your brother?" (Gen. 4:9), is addressed to the Cain in each of us. The way to God lies through love for other people, there is no other way. Disowning my sister or brother, I replace the image of God with the mark of Cain, and deny my essential humanity.

There are three steps to be taken when reading Scripture. First, we reflect that what we have in Scripture is sacred history: the history of the world from the Creation, the history of God's chosen people, the history of God Himself incarnate in Palestine, the history of the "wonderful works" (Acts 2:11) after Pentecost. We are never to forget that what we find in the Bible is not an ideology, not a philosophical theory, but a historical faith.

Secondly, we observe the particularity, of this sacred history. In the Bible we find God intervening at specific times, and in particular places, entering into dialogue with individual human beings. We see before us the distinctive calls issued by God to each different person, to Abraham, Moses, and David, to Rebekah and Ruth, to Isaiah and the prophets. We see God becoming incarnate once only, in a particular corner of the earth, at a particular moment, and from a particular Mother. This particularity we are to regard not as a scandal, but as a blessing. Divine love is universal in its scope, but always personal in its expression.

A personal approach of this kind means that in reading the Bible we are not simply detached and objective observers, absorbing information, taking note of facts. The Bible is not merely: a work of literature, or a collection of

historical documents, although certainly it can be approached on that level. It is, much more fundamentally, a sacred book, addressed to believers, to be read with faith and love. We shall not profit fully from reading the Gospels unless we are in love with Christ. “Heart speaks to heart”. I enter into the living truth of Scripture, only when my heart responds with love to the heart of God.

Reading Scripture in this way - in obedience, as a member of the Church, finding Christ everywhere, and seeing everything as part of my own personal story - we shall sense something of the power and healing to be found in the Bible. Yet always in our biblical voyage of exploration we are only at the very beginning. We are like someone launching out in a tiny boat across a limitless ocean. But, however great the journey, we can embark on it today, at this very hour, in this very moment.

At the high point of his spiritual crisis, wrestling with himself alone in the garden, Saint Augustine heard a child’s voice crying out, “Take up and read, take up and read.” He took up his Bible and read, and what he read altered Augustine’s entire life. Let us do the same: **Let us take up and read our Bibles.**

“Your word O Lord, is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 118 [119]:105).