



BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

Tuesday in Holy Week
April 7, 2020

[RCL] Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 71:1-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; John 12:20-36

Isaiah 49:1-7

This lesson teaches us how every single one of us is so special in the eyes of God. Indeed, even before we were conceived, we existed in God's mind. We are not mere accidents. We are here *with* a purpose and *for* a purpose. Our call is to discern what it is exactly that God is asking from us. In my case, it is an ever-going process, since I can never really pretend to read God's mind. But, when in doubt, vicissitudes of life so often find a way to lead on some hints that will ultimately make sense to my mind and spirit. I take it as God's way of reminding me to trust the process and simply do what I am called to, even when I do not fully understand. God's work is mysterious.

Some, like Isaiah, can affirm the moment the Lord calls and sends them. Others – like me – are always wondering God's will and design on a daily basis. No matter how and when you come to know that God has called you to do God's work, what is important is to acknowledge that you are an instrument God wants to use as "a light to the nations" in order to bring about the Good News of God's kingdom here and now.

- How do you live out your baptismal covenant on a daily basis?
- When you find yourself in doubt, pondering your true calling, what are the signs or events that remind you of your vocation?

Psalm 71:1-14

Growing up in a very small northwestern town in Haiti, I did not have much. No electricity, no running water – even in my family, perhaps for being the second son in the middle of a first son and a first daughter, I was nothing special. Just a regular kid. Not many friends, either. But books, and especially the Bible, were always available to me, and I found a way to befriend them. As I was falling in love with stories like that of Joseph and his brothers and the calling of Abraham and of Moses, I realized I could identify with them and felt very special in the eyes of God – who is always on the side of the oppressed. Hence, God became my best friend and refuge.

As far as I can remember, I always wanted to be a priest – one whom God would use to bless God's people. My parents really liked the idea and made sure I was “set apart” in order to fulfill my vocation. Now that I look back to all the events that shaped my upbringing and life in general, I thank God for my parents and all the good Samaritans who helped me along the way.

I believe that God is always present everywhere, accompanying those called and chosen to minister to God's people. My faith journey has been a long and painful process sometimes, but I never fail to feel God's presence all along the pilgrimage. I have learned to always trust in the Lord even when I do not understand what is going on with my life. My testimony today is that I have never been deceived. God is faithful indeed, the best rampart and hiding place.

- It is not always easy to see the light at the end of the tunnel and, very often, the temptation to fall into despair is very strong. What is it that holds your faith in God together, despite the stumbling blocks life puts in front of you?

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

What I really like about this passage is the way that God, unsurprisingly, does not follow limited human logic. I can proudly say that I am the prime example of God seeing and using great potential in me to raise me up when others considered my faith journey a total failure. I started seminary studies right after high school in Haiti in 2000, but I was ordained in Chile in 2018 after a fairly long process that took me to the Dominican Republic and the United States. Due to the circumstances of my birth and where I was raised, the odds of me sharing this reflection with you were one in a million. But here I am, against all obstacles, still standing.

My lesson is exactly what Paul is teaching us here: I can only boast in the Lord because I am fully aware that none of my personal efforts could have taken me to any of the places I had the blessing to be. That is why my life is a constant thanksgiving prayer to God who “has looked with favor on my lowliness” (Luke 1:48).

- Do you find it funny how God works with us? Can you pray the Magnificat with Mary, rejoicing in God for everything?

John 12:20-36

Jesus' soul was tempted and darkness wanted to invade his being. The temptation of giving up to darkness when we feel the absence of light is tremendous – but Jesus teaches us to resist and do God's will, not just ours, even when it is painful.

God never abandons us in the middle of the trial. Temptations always come, but temptations thrive on our vulnerabilities and on our weaknesses. Lent offers the possibility for us to reflect on good times and to pile up the spiritual gifts needed to address the dark times, because the season assures us that dark times are coming and must not surprise us. Holy Week provides the opportunity to experience loneliness and not be

troubled by it. It's a time to listen to the inner voice and to develop our ability to get used to the voices of God and of the tempter. The tempter is skilled at mimicking the voice of God. The tempter is knowledgeable of the word of God and can use scripture to bait us. Vigilance is key during Holy Week, which is a necessary time for regeneration.

We must understand that the cycles of light and darkness, darkness and light, are unavoidable and necessary. There is always light after darkness.

- Our world is full of darkness. How is your life a testimony of God's light in you?

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