

**(For Monday, 11-28-16) If Jesus visited your church, would he become a member?**

*“What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?” says the Lord... “When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more!” [Is.1:11a-12 – NRSV]*

If Jesus visited your church, what would you point out to him? “See all our lovely stained glass? And the window nearest the pulpit is dedicated to my great-great-grandfather!” “Lord, I’m so glad you’re here, especially today, because our choir will be singing in **eight parts!**” “Jesus, I want you to notice how well we follow our worship traditions; we know when to stand, sit, kneel, and all 3 points in the service when we’re supposed to cross ourselves.” Hmm... Instead, I think the Lord of Love would be far happier in a church where people cared more about each other than the building; where music might be only sung in unison, but with joy and wonder; a church where “choreography” is far less important than the hope, and joy conveyed there.

So...if Jesus dropped by **your** church next Sunday morning, do you think he’d be likely to stay? (Rev. James Barnhill blogs at [www.1thes511.net](http://www.1thes511.net))

**(For Tuesday, 11-29-16) Why does God let so much adversity smack us in the face?**

*Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.* [Ps. 5:8 – NRSV]

“If God loves me, why does he permit so much pain in my life?” Every minister knows this question crops up all the time. It is of the many things they **don’t** teach you to deal with in seminary – because there’s no easy, one-size-fits-all answer. But David’s poetry does give us a reason for much of the calamity that dogs the steps of the faithful. He seems to draw a straight line between the attacks of his enemies and the discernment of God’s will for his life. I’ve become convinced that part of the reason God permits so much challenge in our lives is so we won’t forget what evil and wickedness really look like, and what it’s terrible consequences must inevitably be. If life were only a bowl of cherries, how would we ever learn to deal with the pits?

Have you thanked God lately for the adversity which brings your vision of his blessings into clearer focus? (Rev. James Barnhill blogs at [www.1thes511.net](http://www.1thes511.net))

**(For Wednesday, 11-30-16) What does The Lord really want for us?**

*For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?* [1Thes. 2:9 – NRSV]

What does God most want for his children? When Paul writes the brand new church in Thessalonica, he says that, more than anything else God has wanted for the Apostle Paul to be in their presence; in joyous company with them. The Christian church soon came up with a term for this sense of loving togetherness; they began using the Greek word “*koinonia*” to express this sense of shared blessing which was the communal essence of the Christian faith. In the Lord’s Prayer, when we pray that God’s will in heaven also be done here on earth, it is truly this blessed life in communion for which we are praying. We hear so much talk of “building God’s Kingdom.” But the truth is, we often don’t need to do a thing to please God except to simply “be” – to be together in the joyous fellowship of believers.

Have you experienced *Koinonia* lately? (Rev. James Barnhill blogs at [www.1thes511.net](http://www.1thes511.net))

**(For Thursday, 12-01-16) What do your adversaries say about you?**

*Then some of the scribes answered, 'Teacher, you have spoken well.' For they no longer dared to ask him another question. [Lk.20:39-40 – NRSV]*

There is no indication in this passage from Luke that the Sadducees and scribes had a change of heart about Jesus. They continued to oppose him, and to plot against The Lord and his disciples. But in reaction to his amazing insight into Scripture, these scribes and Sadducees had no alternative except to show Christ their grudging respect. Even the demons themselves were forced to admit the identity of God's Son when he walked among us. And the Bible is full of accounts of how the enemies of the Gospel were obliged to admit their respect for the followers of Jesus when faced with the amazing faith of God's children. You can tell a lot about a man's character by the people who oppose him. And isn't it better to have the clear opposition of the wicked and deceitful of this world, rather than their insincere and fickle praise?

How is God using even your adversaries to glorify His Name?

(Rev. James Barnhill blogs at [www.1thes511.net](http://www.1thes511.net))

**(For Friday, 12-02-16) Are you humble, or are you a push-over?**

*...Aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we charged you, so that you may command the respect of outsiders and be dependent on nobody. [1Thes. 4:11-12 – RSV]*

In the Beatitudes, when Jesus promises that the meek, or the humble will inherit the earth, the Greek used here '*praos*' actually means to be kind, considerate, or gentle. (See Mt.5:5) It certainly does NOT mean we Christians should lack backbone. Yet we seem to have confused humility with humiliation. There is such a difference! Paul's instructions here are to live so as to command the respect of others. How else are people to learn of the blessings that await all who live in the center of God's will, unless they witness the joy, peace, and fulfillment present in the lives of the faithful? Compromise is needed if we are to "live peaceably with everyone." (See Rom.12:14,18) But surely this doesn't mean we are to compromise away our values. Being a humble Christian isn't about being everyone's doormat!

Are you applying a humble strength to your faith?

(Rev. James Barnhill blogs at [www.1thes511.net](http://www.1thes511.net))