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Dear Friends,

I have been at this business of reading Scripture ever since I heard the call. Thirty years after I first start reading it, I am still amazed at the basic story; There is God of love who created everything, seen and unseen, and who in spite of me wants to have a relationship with me, in fact with everyone, even with those I cannot find appealing. For over twenty years now I have been vocationally involved in getting Scripture not only into my mind and heart, arms and legs, ears and mouth but also into those who occasionally listen to what I share.

And I haven't found it easy, at times. In some way I am just beginning to discover the depth and width of God's word to me. Why isn't it easy or at least easier?

Perhaps the challenge – never negligible – regarding God's word to us is listening, but listening on its own term, as God's word to us, to you and me, incessant, and untouched by the commotion around and in me.

It seems to be the easiest thing in the world, to sit down, to take some time and simply read it on its own term without forgone thoughts and conclusions. But as it turns out, in this "business" of living the Christian life, one of the neglected aspects is having to do with the reading of, with the listening to God's word as we encounter it in Scripture. Not that we don't read the Bible, not that we don't believe that it is the word of God to us. But what people like Leonard Sweet (Jesus speaks), Eugene Peterson (Eat this Book) Walter Brueggemann (The Word that rediscibes the world, The Book that breathes New Life) and many others are suggesting is that by an

large the church fails to read God's word *formatively, revealing to us a definitive and binding way to live.*

And I think there is some truth to it, certainly when I read Luke 24, where Jesus needed to open up the ears and eyes of his close's friends in order for them to understand. Until this moment, their eyes and ears where moving back and forth across the scrolls "reading, listening" but not reading, listening, reverent and devout but uncomprehending, honouring in a most precious ways the letter without an awareness that it had anything to do with them personally, there and now. God's word to us, depersonalized into an object to be honoured, studied and perhaps memorized. Up to this moment, until Jesus opens up Scripture to his friends, his disciples, people who followed him (in the flesh) all they brought was devout indifference to its actual life giving and personal message.

What I see developing from there on is that the friends of Jesus, the disciples of Jesus, those who followed him, no longer followed him in the flesh, but empowered by an understanding of Scripture that centered on him, Scripture that was now open to them like never before and in the power of the Holy Spirit they are now able to allow Another to have a say in everything they are saying, doing and even believing. Scripture, as God's word, challenges the individual to make repeated choices between a clearly defined way of whom to believe in and the ways we act in this world.

And this is what I hope to cultivate more in my own reading, listening and doing as I too allow Another to have the final say in everything I believe, do and say. I want to ruminate leisurely the words of God in contrast to wolfing them down in order to extract information void of live. I want to read God's word in order to be formed by the Word, and not simply informed of the historical backdrop God used to make himself known. I think that kind of reading was in the mind of the canonical writers who wrestled God's revelation into Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek sentences – writers like Moses, Jeremiah, Mark, Luke and Paul. God's word was spoken to keep us in touch with and responsive to reality (truth), God-reality and God-presence, even if both interrupt our "natural" flow of life and we die to ourselves in is wake. God's word listened to reminds us of His presence and involvement in our lives, and it is getting us in on what is, on what God has always done, is doing and will be doing... His words and His doing, in the Holy Spirit, are intended, whether confrontationally (repent) or encouragingly (I am well pleased), to get inside us, to deal with our hearts, to transform us from the inside out with an end in mind for the here and now. And this end is, to live a life that reflect the life of Christ, that is reflective of the world that God

created us for, the salvation he offers, and the community of friends, disciples, people who follow him, he is gathering.

And so, I invite you today to read with me tomorrow James 4, but only after you had a little taste Rev. 10:9-10;

Bon Appetit. Your friend Manfred

Church of God at Camrose • 780 672 3461 • ccog@camrosechurchofgod.ca • 4722 55
Street Camrose, Alberta T4V 2B6
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