



Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

Image by Christine Sponchia

RETURN TO THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

By Fr. David C. Robinson, S.J.

Excerpt from Today's First Reading and Today's Gospel

The heavens and the earth quake, but the Lord is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the children of Israel. Then shall you know that I, the Lord, am your God, dwelling on Zion, my holy mountain; Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall pass through her no more. And then, on that day, the mountains shall drip new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk; and the channels of Judah shall flow with water: a fountain shall issue from the house of the Lord, to water the Valley of Shittim.

JOEL 4:16-18

While Jesus was speaking, a woman from the crowd called out and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts at which you nursed." He replied, "Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

LUKE 11:27-28

Reflection

Joel's vision of the future promise of God for Israel provides a richly detailed account of the ways in which the people will be established on their land, flowing with the riches of a restored home. In addition, the power of God will be their shield against enemies who wish them harm. Reference is made to the **fountain that will issue from the house of the Lord, to water the Valley of Shittim**. This carries a double significance. The name *Shittim* literally means 'acacias,' trees that provided wood for much of the construction that the people undertook in their new homeland, but was also the wood chosen by God to build the Ark of the Covenant. In addition, the Valley of Shittim was the location in Moab from which the people entered the Promised Land at the end of their years of Exodus. The significance would not be lost on the communities who had returned from the Babylonian Captivity. Joel is emphasizing the all-encompassing grace of God to be manifested for the future generations of Israel, who will receive the full bounty of divine graciousness.

The brief selection from Luke 11 is situated in the middle of a series of chastisements and condemnations against the hypocrisies and religious illusions present in the Jewish communities of Jesus' time—particularly among the Pharisees. He proclaims, **"blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."** This simple but pointed message attempts to turn the people's hearts from their ideological conflicts to a renewed covenant with their God.

Both Joel and Jesus are speaking to their religious families in the midst of fierce, ongoing conflicts—divisions over the Law, temple practice, personal behavior and social norms. They are preaching and teaching, exhorting their communities to return to a living focus on God and God's loving ways of guiding them on their journeys of faith. It does not require a heavy dose of analysis to recognize similar rifts in our own religious families. We can all too readily divide ourselves with words and doctrinal forms—turning worship, scripture, and prayer into weapons for self-justification. We would do well to heed Joel and Jesus. God's promise is the fulfillment of the justice and the mercy we strive to nurture in our lives. It is not complex or confusing. Jesus captured it wonderfully in the dual commandment: **Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself**. If that is our foundation and the measure of our acts and words, we won't find justice to be harsh. It will simply be our calling back to the mercy which is love!



Desert reaches
Photo by Fr. David C. Robinson, S.J.

For Pondering

- How would you define 'mercy' in 50 words or less?
 - How would you define 'justice' in 50 words or less?
 - How do the two words connect for you in your religious, social, and moral life?
-

If you enjoy reading our reflections and would like to make a donation towards this ministry, click the button below!

[Support Us Here](#)



Center for
Spiritual
Development

COMPANIONS ON THE
SACRED JOURNEY



[Visit Website](#)

714-744-3172

[Join Mailing
List](#)



To “Unsubscribe” from the daily reflections while remaining on our general mailing list, please [email us](#). The unsubscribe function below will unsubscribe you from all emails from CSD. Please know we will never share your information.

Center for Spiritual Development | 434 A South Batavia Street, Orange, CA 92868 714-744-3175

[Unsubscribe slongbotham@csjorange.org](mailto:slongbotham@csjorange.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data
Notice](#)

Sent by bythecsd@csjorange.org