

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Personal Knowledge of the Lord**    First Week of Advent    Tuesday, December 1, 2015  
8:15 AM    **Is 11:1-10; Lk 10:21-24**    (We have to be in dialogue: word of God/our modern culture, challenging our modern culture and yet at the same time trying to express the word of God in a more contemporary way.)

**“There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as water covers to sea.”**

There is of course a clear connection between the reading from Isaiah and the gospel because **Jesus is praying in the Holy Spirit thanking God for the personal knowledge he has of him, which is this knowledge Isaiah is talking about, knowledge of the Lord. It is a power that changes people.**

Isaiah says it will fill the earth as the sea is filled with water. That has not yet occurred. It began in Jesus and it continues in those to whom he wishes to reveal God. Well, we assume that he wishes to reveal God to everybody, but apparently everyone is not so interested in receiving it because the reception is also something that is important. **It has to be a free action, a free desire to receive this revelation.** And we can see that even sometimes good people are distracted from this knowledge of the Lord by trying to do good things, which of course we always encourage. We encourage good works. We encourage charity, works of justice; all this is important, but not to the exclusion of personal knowledge of God. In fact, **personal knowledge of God should inspire and motivate good works, not, however, good works moving knowledge of God out of the picture** because we are too busy; we have to keep going; we have more to do.

**Knowledge of God comes as Jesus says here to the childlike, in other words not through work, effort, even education.** This kind of knowledge is not the product of education. It's not like learning your lessons. It's something else. It's personal. **It comes from prayer. It**

**comes from spending time in quiet with the Lord. It comes from pondering the Scriptures,** not studying their grammar or their history, but **trying to understand the message within it.**

In the first reading Isaiah talks about the gifts of the Spirit. They are manifold. Many of them have to do with such things as wisdom and understanding and right judgment. These are all matters of the mind. But as we grew up in a society we grow up with a consensus about what is real given to us by our culture. We have to realize that that is very debatable. **What our culture thinks is real is very debatable.** It's not a hundred percent wrong, but it's debatable. We have to dialogue with it.

That is why a great Protestant preacher, Karl Barth, once said that a preacher has to prepare his sermon with **the Bible in one hand and the *New York Times* in the other.** By *New York Times* of course he meant this organ of the modern consensus, the so-called liberal establishment, the way people in the academic world think; and that has to be **in dialogue** with the word of God because it's not the same. And we can't simply "modernize" ourselves by adapting to the modern world. Rather we have to be in dialogue: word of God/our modern culture, **challenging our modern culture and yet at the same time trying to express the word of God in a more contemporary way.** This is the work of knowing God and carrying that knowledge to others.