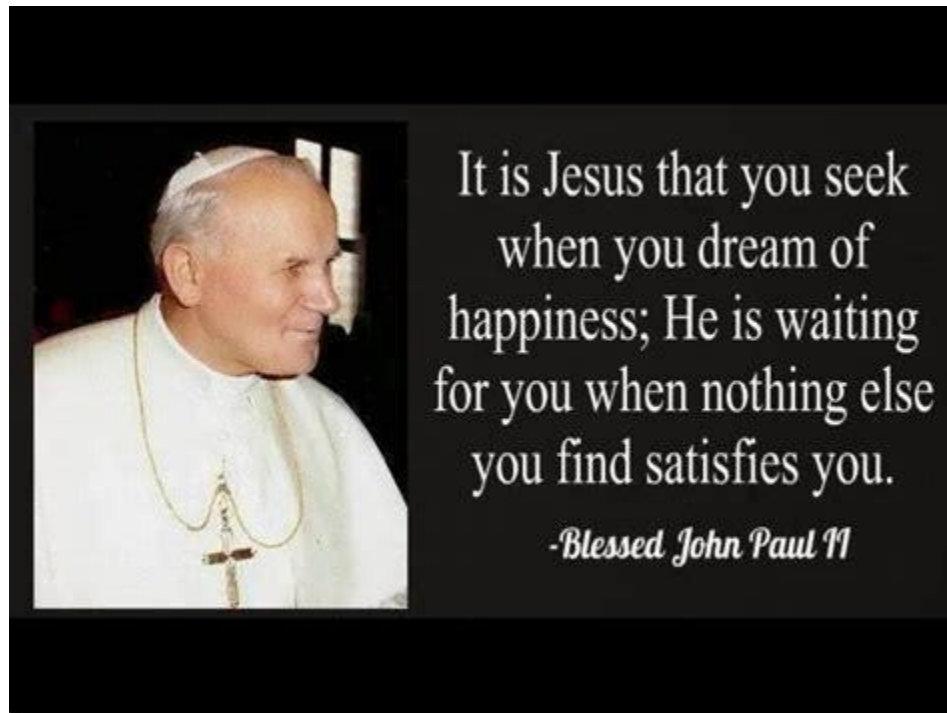


FROM FATHER JOHN: “And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man’s ears and, spitting, touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, “*Ephphatha!*” (that is, ‘Be opened!’) And [immediately] the man’s ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly.” (Mark 7:32 – 35)



There are many things that we can learn from reading the Old Testament as well as reading the New Testament. Sometimes we focus so much on reading about our Lord Jesus in the gospels that we forget that the Old Testament has so much in it that can help us in our spiritual lives.

Take Adam and Eve and their fall from grace as an example.

“Now the snake was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He asked the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat from any of the trees in the garden?’” The woman answered the snake: “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘You shall not eat it or even touch it, or else you will die.’” But the snake said to the woman: “You certainly will not die! God knows well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know good and evil.” The woman saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and the tree was desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” (Genesis 3:1 – 6)*

Eve decided she knew better than God, that she could bend the rules and do what she wanted to do. Her reaction is very human and it’s very familiar. It’s what we all do when we fall into sin.

Bishop Spies likes to define sin in this way. *I want what I want, and I want it right now.* We decide that we deserve whatever we want regardless of what God is saying to us. Our fallen human nature leads us to place our expectation of how things should turn out on God and expect God to act in the way that we want. Instead, we should discern what God expects of us and then act in the way in which God wants us to act.

Our Lord Jesus healed a deaf man in the district of Decapolis simply by touching his ears, his tongue and crying out *“Be Opened!”* (Mark 7:33 – 34) This miracle is different from most of the healing miracles we read about in the gospels. There is no mention of faith, nor of casting out a demon. Our Lord Jesus took him aside from the crowd and quietly healed him.

It reminds me of Naaman who went to Elisha to be healed of leprosy. Elisha didn’t even go out of the house but sent a message to Naaman to go and wash in the Jordan River seven times. Naaman was upset about this for several reasons but one of them was that this was not the dramatic healing he thought he would receive. Naaman left angry saying, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand there to call on the name of the Lord his God, and would move his hand over the place, and thus cure the leprous spot” (2 Kings 5:11). An important man like Naaman needed an impressive healing that didn’t include immersing himself seven times in a dirty river.

We tend to look for the spectacular from our God but sometimes God chooses to act in a small but meaningful way. I think that might be part of why some people fall away from the faith. They have an expectation of how God should be present in their lives, how they should experience God’s presence and when God touches them in different and subtler ways, they simply don’t recognize the Lord in the moment. This is what Adam and Eve did, this is what Naaman did, this is what we tend to do as we fall into sin, place our expectations on God and try to control God so that we can get what we want and get it right now.

We need to remember that God takes simple unleavened bread and wine and feeds us with His Body and Blood. We need to remember that God’s ways are not our ways and simply accept God’s presence in our lives in whatever way God decides to manifest Himself to us.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.