

1. As many of you know, one of my favorite movies is the HBO miniseries Angels in America.
2. One of the main reasons I like it is because although it is a movie about,
 - a. a man named Pryor Walter,
 - b. dying with AIDS in the 1980's,
 - c. who begins having visions of Angels,
 - d. it is really a movie about finding God.
3. Because you see according to the angels,
 - a. the reason why the 20th century was so bloody
 - b. and a new plague named AIDS had broken out
 - i. was that God had disappeared.
4. That was why the angels were appearing to Pryor;
 - a. the angels are desperately trying to fix things in God's absence.
 - b. And Pryor has been chosen to help.
 - c. How? He has to become heaven's prophet.
5. You can like or dislike Angels in America.
6. You can think the idea of a gay man with AIDS as a prophet is ridiculous.
7. But I don't think anyone can say that they do not know what the angels were talking about.
8. For in our world, filled with war and terror, disease and fear,
 - a. many people no longer believe in God,
 - b. and those of us who do, often wonder where God went.
9. Samuel would have understood this.
 - a. A couple of verses before this morning's first reading,
 - b. it says that he lived in a time where "The Word of the Lord was rare".
 - c. God was no longer speaking; it seemed that God was gone.
10. Andrew and Simon would have understood this as well.
 - a. The two brothers in today's Gospel lived in a country
 - i. occupied by the Roman Empire
 - ii. and in a time where it was a struggle just to survive.
11. Imagine what it would be like to have rulers,
 - a. who break laws, terrorize strangers and oppress foreigners;
12. imagine what it would be like to have Vladimir Putin as our ruler,
 - a. and the Taliban as our supreme court.
13. We would wonder how God could let such a thing happen.
 - a. God must be gone.
14. Samuel came to live in the temple
 - a. because his family believed he would find God there.
15. Andrew and Simon came to stay with John the Baptist,
 - a. because they hoped they would find God there.
16. That is what we always do; we seek out holy people holy places, we go to shrines, we come to church
 - a. for in a world where God seems to have disappeared,
 - b. we come here hoping to find out where God has gone.

17. Then one night Samuel hears a voice whispering in his ear.
 - a. He thinks it is Eli the priest; three times he goes to Eli,
 - b. three times Eli says, “It’s not me go back to bed!” Who could that voice be?
18. And one day, John the Baptist point at this guy walking by and says to Andrew and Simon, “BEHOLD the Lamb of God!”
 - a. Who? They must have asked themselves. That guy?
 - b. No angels carried him. No heavenly voices proclaimed his appearance.
 - i. Jesus was just some guy in a crowd,
 - ii. just as the voice Samuel heard was just some whispers in his ear.
19. But then his master Eli told Samuel to go back to bed,
 - a. but instead of speaking, to simply listen.
20. And Jesus told Andrew and Simon to follow him to where he lived;
 - a. but instead of searching for God to simply come and see.
21. It was only when Samuel gave up speaking and simply listened
 - a. that he realized who that unremarkable voice was.
22. It was only when Simon and Andrew gave up searching and simply followed,
 - a. that they realized who Jesus was.
23. It was God. God has not stopped speaking;
 - a. it was just that people had forgotten how to listen.
24. God had not disappeared.
 - a. It was just that people had forgotten how to find God.
25. God was not gone.
 - a. It was just that Samuel, and Andrew and Simon
 - b. And you and me forget so often
 - i. that to hear God we have to learn to shut up and let God speak,
 - ii. and to find God we have to give up and let God find us.
26. One of the things I like most about *Angels in America*
 - a. is that Pryor Walter is chosen to be a prophet;
 - b. by definition one who speaks God’s word.
27. You can love it or hate it, but one thing is for sure:
 - a. a gay man dying of AIDS
 - b. is the last place any of us would look for God’s presence,
 - c. And his words would be the last we would listen to, for God’s voice.
28. Which is of course precisely our problem.
29. And precisely the point.
30. This past Friday I celebrated a memorial mass for David, a homeless man.
 - a. His brother and a few friends came.
 - b. David’s friend Richard got up and talked about how he used to encounter David with no shirt, no shoes day after day in the street.
 - c. And yet whenever Richard asked David if he needed something or how he was, all David would say was, God has blessed me.
31. Richard was the one to eventually get David off the street, and into a shelter,
 - a. where he reconnected with his brother
 - b. and lived the last five years of his life.

32. David met God in Richard; and Richard in David.
33. And when I heard that story,
 - a. after complaining all morning to myself about nothing,
 - b. I realized I had heard, not Richard's voice, but God's.
34. Funny how although I was in a Church, I wasn't really listening for it.
 - a. Which is of course precisely the problem and the point.
35. All of us come to church looking for God. I know I do.
 - a. And that is good;
 - b. for one of the most important reasons to come to church
 - c. is to learn what God sounds like; learn what God looks like.
 - d. But we do not come in here simply to meet God here;
 - e. we come here so we can learn to meet God out there.
36. To hear God in a story about a homeless man whose life is blessed
37. Or in the tale of how a dying man can speak God's word to America
38. To meet God in David,
39. To meet God in Richard.
40. To meet God in the ordinary faces of ordinary people like Jesus, and you and me.
41. To listen for God's word here in the silence between the words we speak,
 - a. so that we can hear God speak
 - b. in the thundering silence of a world filled with words,
 - c. but which never seems to say anything.
42. Be still and listen. Come and see. God is still speaking God is still present. God did not leave. We did. But thank God, we can always come back. For with God, we are never alone.