

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 10 April 2023.

(i) Scripture.

And Jesus went on with His disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way He asked His disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?'

And they told Him, 'John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets'.

And He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?'

Peter answered Him, 'You are the Christ'.

And He strictly charged them to tell no one about Him.

And He began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Mark 8. 27-31 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Be strong and courageous', Joshua 1.

'This we read not once but four times ...

'The first time God calls Joshua to strength and courage, it is based on His promise: "Be strong and courageous, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them" (Josh. 1. 6)

'The second time, it is based on His precepts: "Be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go" (Josh. 1. 7).

'The third time, it is based on His presence: "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Josh. 1. 9).

'In the fourth instance, it is not God saying it to Joshua this time, but the people: "Only be strong and courageous" (Josh. 1. 18)'.
(J. B. Nicholson Jr, 'Strong and Courageous', Taste and See, Uplook Ministries, 21 March 2023.)

'The reproach of Egypt'.

'When the circumcision was completed, the Lord said to Joshua, "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you". "The reproach of Egypt" is the reproach proceeding from Egypt, as "the reproach of Moab" (Zeph. 2. 8) is the reproach heaped upon Israel by Moab (cf. Isa. 51. 7; Ezek. 16. 57).

'We are ... to understand by this ... the reproach involved in the thoughts and sayings of the Egyptians, that Jehovah had brought the Israelites out of Egypt to destroy them in the desert (Exod. 32. 12; Num. 14. 13-16; Deut. 9. 28), which rested upon Israel as long as it was condemned to wander restlessly about and to die in the wilderness.

'This reproach was rolled away from Israel with the circumcision of the people at Gilgal, inasmuch as this act was a practical declaration of the perfect restoration of the covenant, and a pledge that the Lord would now give them the land of Canaan for their inheritance'.

(*Commentary on the Old Testament by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch*, Volume II, page 59.)

David and Saul.

'The fundamental difference between David and Saul is obvious. Both men abused power in high office.

'What makes them different is the way they respond to a rebuke.

'When Samuel accused Saul of sin, the latter dissembled; when Jonathan questioned Saul's policy, a spear was thrown at him.

'By contrast, although Nathan approaches his subject obliquely, the sin is soon out in the open: "You are the man!" (2 Sam. 12. 7). Yet David's response is radically different: "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12. 13)'.
(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 1, meditation for 16 September.)

'Seek the Lord ... seek His face continually' (1 Chron. 16. 11).

'Leave behind for a time your preoccupations; hide yourself for a while from the turmoil of your thoughts. Turn aside now from your burdensome cares, and set aside your laborious pursuits.

'Make time for God, and rest a while in Him ... shut out everything except God and what is of aid to you in seeking Him; and, having barred the door of your chamber, seek Him out'.

(Anselm of Canterbury, '*Proslogion*', Chapter 1.)

'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me' (Psa. 66. 18).

'Sin and prayer cannot both live at the same time in the same heart. Admit sin, and you banish prayer. But, on the other hand, entertain, and encourage, and practise prayer, and sin will sooner or later flee before it'.

(Alexander Whyte, '*Lord, Teach Us to Pray*', page 119.)

Ezra and Nehemiah: the restoration (i) of God's temple and city and (ii) of God's people.

'*Ezra* reveals that for the Jews returning to Jerusalem, the challenge was to rebuild not only their city, but also their relationship with the Lord. Chapters 1 through 6 deal with the restoration of the temple, while chapters 7 through 10 are concerned with the reformation of the covenant community.

'*Nehemiah* records how not only the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, but also how the people were renewed in their faith in God. Chapters 1 through 7 recount how the city's walls were successfully reconstructed, despite the stiff opposition from Judah's foes. Then, in chapters 8 through 13, the spiritual restoration of the Jews is highlighted'.

(Dan Lioy, '*From Zenith to Zero*', *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary*, Volume 9, pages 69-94.)

'He charged them that they should tell no man' (Mark 7. 36; 8. 30; 9. 9).

'It is in fact exactly from the injunctions to silence that we shall get the clue to the whole situation. We may begin from two basic assumptions. First, Jesus did think of Himself as the Anointed One of God, as the Messiah. Second, if we are to place any reliance on the Gospel record at all, then we must believe that Jesus did insist that His Messiahship should be kept a secret.

'So, then, the first question is the reason for this secrecy. The reason is in the light of history very simple. If it had been widely spread around that Jesus was the Messiah, quite certainly the populace would have read their own meaning into that term; and quite certainly that would have been a nationalistic meaning.

'John tells the story of the attempt to come and to compel Jesus to be king (John 6. 15). If that had happened, the consequences would have been disastrous. There would quite certainly have been a rebellion and an uprising on the spot, and it would have been mercilessly crushed.

'It is the simple historical fact that in the thirty years from 67 to 37 B.C., before the emergence of Herod the Great, no fewer than one hundred and fifty thousand men perished in Palestine in revolutionary uprisings. There was no more explosive and inflammable country in the world than Palestine.

'If Jesus had publicly claimed to be Messiah, nothing could have stopped a useless flood tide of slaughter. Before Jesus could openly make any claim to Messiahship, it was absolutely necessary that He should lead men to see what Messiahship meant'.

(William Barclay, '*Jesus as They Saw Him*', pages 158-159.)

The miracle of the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

'It's a strange day, this in-between day. In between despair and joy. In between confusion and clarity. In between bad news and good news. In between darkness and light ...

'From a human standpoint, we think of the miraculous day as Sunday, the day the man Jesus is risen from the dead. I wonder if, from Heaven's standpoint, the great miracle isn't rather on Saturday. When Jesus is born, the skies are filled with the heavenly hosts praising God because that baby is Emmanuel, God with us ... Now on Saturday the angels look down and see what? (The Son of) God in a tomb.

The miracle of Sunday is that a dead man lives. The miracle of Saturday is that the eternal Son of God lies dead'.

(John Ortberg, '*Who Is This Man?*', page 185.)

'His head is as the most fine gold ... His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold' (Song of Songs 5. 11, 15).

'When the Beloved speaks of the features of the bride, He speaks to her assuring her of His delight in her. However, when she describes His features, she speaks of Him to others, not to Him as if to approve Him. He fills her wondering eyes.

'Nothing less than a full-length portrait will begin to do justice to His tenfold loveliness. There is no deterioration here, from His golden head to His golden feet. How different this is from the imposing image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream concerning the succeeding Gentile world empires, the head of which was gold, but the feet were iron and clay [Dan 2. 32-33]'.
(Cyril Hocking, 'Rise Up My Love', page 248.)

'Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place"' (Matt. 26. 52).

'Poor Peter dragging the sword from beneath his garment and taking a blow at the nearest. He meant it for his head but it only got his ear. The shouts, the trampled undergrowth, the scared disciples, and the inquisitive mob.

'But Jesus is master of the situation ... His will is perfectly attuned with the Father's. He is going right on by way of the cross. Turning on Peter, He ordered the sword back into its sheath and broke their last hopes of spectacular conquest. He would not appeal to force. "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and He shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" But He would not call them'.

(W. E. Sangster, 'What If Calamity Comes?', God Does Guide Us, 1934, page 100.)

Jesus, 'the true', in the writings of John.

(i) 'The true light' (John 1. 9).

(ii) 'The true bread' (John 6. 32).

(iii) 'The true vine' (John 15. 1).

(iv) 'The true God' (1 John 5. 20). ['He is characterised as "the true God and eternal life". So fully is the Father expressed in His Son that what is predicated of the former is predicated of the latter', F. F. Bruce, 'The Epistles of John', page 128.].

(v) 'The true witness' (Rev. 3. 14).

God's righteousness and love made known at the cross.

The sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus (i) declares the righteousness of God (Rom. 3. 25-26) and (ii) commends the love of God (Rom. 5. 8).

'We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God' (Heb. 4. 14).

'Just as Aaron passed through the outer court of the tabernacle, and through the holy place and into the holiest, for (the children of Israel), so has Jesus passed through the heavens for us.

'He has gone from this world, through the aerial heavens and through the starry heavens, and into heaven itself (Heb. 9. 24)'.

(J. M. Flanigan, 'Hebrews: What the Bible Teaches', pages 82–83.)

'I am persuaded that neither death nor life ... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God' (Rom. 8. 39).

'If all our sins laid upon Christ could not take away God's love from Him, shall they take away God's love from us, when by Christ's blood our souls are purged from them?'

(Richard Sibbes, 'Of Confirming this Trust in God', in The Soul's Conflict and Victory over Itself by Faith, pages 325–326.)

A conspiracy of grace.

'In a massive conspiracy of grace, Father, Son, and Spirit have plotted together to turn our lives around'.

(David Hubbard, 'The Holy Spirit in Today's World', page 29.)

'The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin' (1 John 1. 7).

1. An American comedian once quipped, 'I have a very fine doctor. *If you can't afford the operation, he touches up the x-rays*'. (Henny Youngman, 'Giant book of Jokes', page 15.)

God's word says, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ... I the Lord search the heart' (Jer. 17. 9-10). God doesn't offer to touch up our x-rays! Rather, He deals with our spiritual sickness!

'On the basis of the justice and mercy in Christ's work of salvation, God forgives sins. Absolute forgiveness for all sins'.

(D. W. McCullough, 'The Trivialization of God', page 100.)

'Oh, wonder of all wonders,
That through Thy death for me,
My open sins, my secret sins,
Can all forgiven be'.
(K. A. M. Kelly)

'My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought—
My sin, not in part, but the whole,
Is nailed to His Cross, and I bear it no more;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
(Horatio G. Spafford)

2. 'Many a true and honest soul is troubled about sins, and afraid of being finally lost on account of those committed after conversion ...

'Let me ask you a question, "When Christ died on the Cross how many sins had you or I committed?" None—we were not either of us born but still, blessed be His name, I know He bore mine—all of them too. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree", says Peter, and this is enough for me.

'He bore them when He died. He forgives them when I believe ... I know they are pardoned, and blotted out, when I believe Him; and I know it, not because I feel it, but because God says it'.

(W. T. P. Wolston, '*When He Died on the Cross*', page 8.)

'Have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honour Him as Lord' (1 Pet. 3. 15 - Good News Bible).

'I end with a story which the late Donald Coggan, former Archbishop of Canterbury, sometimes told ...

"There was a sculptor once, so they say, who sculpted a statue of our Lord. And people came from great distances to see it—Christ in all His strength and tenderness. They would walk all round the statue, trying to grasp its splendour, looking at it now from this angle, now from that. Yet still its grandeur eluded them, until they consulted the sculptor himself.

'He would invariably reply, "There's only one angle from which this statue can be truly seen. You must kneel!"

(John Stott, '*The Incomparable Christ*', page 235.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

1. Two friends—a lawyer and a doctor—were working out at the local gym.

'I've got a small problem', the doctor told his friend. 'As you know, I come here to exercise. But people keep pestering me for health advice. What do you think I should do?'

'No problem', responded the lawyer. 'Whenever you give advice to someone, follow it up by sending that person a bill'.

Two days later, the doctor opened his mail and found a note from his lawyer friend ... *it enclosed a bill.*

2. One evening, when eating out at a local restaurant, Stanley Burgess wore a shirt with the designer's signature on the right sleeve.

As he stood in line, waiting for a table, an elderly gentleman stood behind him. Tapping Stanley on the shoulder, the older man pointed to the label and said, 'Nice name!'

Then the gentleman's curiosity got the better of him. '*What*', he asked Stanley, '*do you call your other arm?*'