

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 5 February 2024

Greetings.

Over the course of the past two weeks, my wife Linda (i) has been in hospital twice (once for surgery), (ii) has had an urgent appointment at our local GP's surgery and (iii) has had a home visit from an out-of-hours doctor at 3 o'clock yesterday morning.

I have to confess that I have found time spent waiting on these occasions (on one of which, we waited for over six hours only to be told at the end that there was no senior doctor available to see Linda) to be rather 'challenging'.

I confirmed what I have long suspected - that I do not take easily to 'waiting" and the more so when thinking of the many tasks on which I could have been engaged.

I suppose that, in one sense, my dislike of 'waiting' has much in common with the impatience of biblical characters such as (i) Abram and Sarai (Gen. 15. 4-5; 16. 1-2), (ii) Moses (Acts 7. 23-25) and (iii) Saul, the son of Kish (1 Sam. 10. 8; 13. 8-9). But, in each of those biblical instances, the results of impatience proved to be rather more serious than in mine!

I recently came across the following account of a modern, related incident:

'Years ago, managers at a Houston airport noticed their customers had lodged many complaints about long waits at baggage claim. Their first solution was to hire more baggage handlers in order to make the loading and unloading process as efficient as possible. And it worked. The average wait time at each baggage claim was only eight minutes. Very fast for the industry. Yet the complaints persisted. People were still angry about waiting so long to receive their bags.

'The managers then commissioned a study and realized the wait times at their airport were within industry norms; their customers were waiting a normal amount of time. Still, the number of complaints alarmed them.

'Looking into the issue more deeply, the airport managers realized it took most flyers only a single minute to walk from their gates to baggage claim. Once they arrived, they spent an average of seven minutes waiting for their bags. Those seven minutes seemed to be the root of the problem.

'As an experiment, the managers arranged things so that passengers had to walk a longer distance between their gates and baggage claim. After the change, most people walked eight to ten minutes and found their bags waiting when they arrived.

'The complaints stopped'.

(Source: David Jeremiah, 'Encouraging Words for a Discouraging World', pages 43-44, quoted from Alex Stone, 'Why Waiting Is Torture', New York Times, August 18, 2012,)

When thinking about all this, my mind went to the words of a psalmist: *'my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning'* (Psa. 130. 6).

I enjoy the comments of one expositor:

'More anxiously than the watchman longs for the dawn which is to release him from his duty does the devout Israelite long for the end of the night of trouble and the dawn of a happier day. The repetition of watchmen for the morning gives a touch of pathetic earnestness.

'Most commentators suppose that military sentinels are meant by watchmen; but the (Jewish) Targum renders, "My soul waits for Jehovah, more than the keepers of the morning-watch which they keep in order to offer the morning sacrifice," understanding the allusion to be to the custom that one of the Levites who kept the night watch in the Temple was appointed to watch for the moment of the dawn, at which the daily sacrifice was to be offered.

'This explanation adds point to the comparison, for the Levites were watching with eager expectation for a dawn which would bring not merely release from toil but positive blessing, in the renewed assurance of God's covenant mercy'.

(A. F. Kirkpatrick, 'The Book of Psalms: The Cambridge Bible', Volume 3, page 760.)

Oh to be that hungry and thirsty after God!

I set out below today's detailed 'Musings', with my apology that, on account of domestic pressures, I have run out of time and have, therefore, been unable to include any 'Go on, smile' item(s). For such, you will have to 'wait' for a future 'Musings'!

But, 'Happy reading'.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins ...

Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable.

And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.

Luke 3. 2-18 (*King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'John answered ... "I baptize you with water, but He who is mightier than I is coming ... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire' (Luke 3. 16).

'One not only mightier and more dignified ... would be distinguished by baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire; baptizing with the Holy Ghost as the fruit of His first advent, and baptizing with fire as the accompaniment of the second.

'When the Lord Jesus comes again, He will baptize with fire; He will execute the solemn judgment of God upon the world ... When the disciples were with the Lord after His resurrection, He spoke to them of the things concerning the kingdom, besides giving them many infallible proofs of His own life in resurrection after His suffering (Acts 1. 3-5).

'Among the rest, He told them that they were not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. The Lord therefore distinguished John's from His own mission by this: He baptized with the Holy Ghost, John only with water. Accordingly, not many days after this, on the day of Pentecost, the baptism of the Holy Ghost became a fact ... the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they were thus baptized (as Paul afterwards taught – "into one body"; that is, the Church). Of the baptism with fire, you will observe, the Lord does not speak one word. The reason is that this was not to be accomplished then.

'When John is looking onwards, he sees both, but when Christ had actually suffered on the cross, He announces the one and not the other. Baptism with fire will take place when the Lord will be revealed from heaven "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1.7-8). This is plain: "Whose winnowing fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his threshing floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable" (Luke 3. 17). This is the baptism with fire'.

(W. Kelly, 'Notes on Luke 3. 15-38', Bible Treasury, Volume 6.)

'That you may' know, grow and show.

(i) 'I bow my knees to the Father ... that He would grant ... that you ... may ... know the love of Christ' (Eph 3. 17-19).

(ii) 'As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby' (1 Pet. 2. 2).

(iii) 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may show the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' (1 Pet. 2. 9).

'You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me, and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life' (John 5. 39-40).

I have read that there was a teenage boy, who was deeply interested in scientific subjects, especially astronomy. His father, therefore, bought him a very expensive telescope.

Since the young fellow had studied the principles of optics, he found the instrument to be most intriguing. He took it apart, examined the lenses, and made detailed calculations on the distance of its point of focus.

The youth became so absorbed in gaining a technical knowledge of the telescope itself that he never got around to looking at the stars!

'According to the commandment of the Lord they encamped, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed' (Num. 9. 20, 23).

Both the people's (i) remaining and (ii) relocation were 'according to the commandment of the Lord':

(i) 'When the cloud rose from the tent, then the children of Israel journeyed; and at the place where the cloud stood still, there the children of Israel encamped' (Num. 9. 17).

(ii) 'If the cloud was there from the evening until the morning, and the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed; or a day and a night, and the cloud was taken up, they journeyed; or two days, or a month, or many days, when the cloud was long upon the tabernacle, dwelling upon it, the children of Israel remained encamped, and journeyed not; but when it was taken up, they journeyed' (Num. 9. 21-22).

In one sense, it is not only 'the steps of a good man' which 'are ordered by the Lord' (Psa. 37. 23) but also his stops!

'Spread thy skirt (literally, 'your wings') over thy handmaid' (Ruth 3. 9).

'Boaz's statement to Ruth during their first meeting was, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust" (Ruth 2. 12). On the threshing floor, Ruth now uses similar language.

'By asking Boaz to spread his wing over her, Ruth draws upon Boaz's own imagery, implying that he is the fulfilment of her coming under the Lord's wings. Boaz's power to redeem her gives him the ability to fulfil this blessing.

'Boaz's redemption of Ruth would justify her trust in the Lord. That act by Boaz would simultaneously spread his and the Lord's wings over the plaintive Moabite.

'One of the major motifs of the book of Ruth is that people are often the Lord's means for pouring forth His blessings ... Here Ruth asks Boaz to be the Lord's wings'.

(Kerry Muhlestein, 'Ruth, Redemption, Covenant, and Christ', page 200).

'Jesus called a little child to Him ...and said, "Truly I say to you, Unless you ... become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"' (Matt. 18. 1-3).

'There is no suggestion that children are innocent or sinless, no hint that their faith is intrinsically pure, no sentimental illusion that children have a better understanding of God than do adults.

'The primary point of the analogy is established by the context of the disciples' argument. While they fret over who is greatest in the kingdom, Jesus is at pains to draw attention to members of society whom no one would think great.

'Children are such dependent creatures. They are not strong, wise, or sophisticated. They are relatively transparent. Proud adults, then, must humble themselves so that they may approach God as do little children: simply, in unselfconscious dependence, without any hope of being the greatest in the kingdom'.

(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 1, reflections for 18 January.)

'That you may' know, grow and show.

(i) 'I bow my knees to the Father ... that He would grant ... that you ... may ... know the love of Christ' (Eph 3. 17-19).

(ii) 'As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby' (1 Pet. 2. 2).

(iii) 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may show the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' (1 Pet. 2. 9).

The five widows in the Gospel according to Luke.

- (i) The widow who served (Luke 2. 37).
- (ii) The widow who was succoured (Luke 4, 26).
- (iii) The widow who sorrowed (Luke 7. 12).
- (iv) The widow who supplicated (Luke 18. 3).
- (v) The widow who sacrificed (Luke 21. 3).

A few brief reflections on the Epistle to the Hebrews.

(i) 'Under (the Levitical priesthood) the people received the law' (Heb. 7. 11).

'When a man was guilty of a breach of the law, the requisite sacrifice was supposed to heal that breach. When the writer to the Hebrews says that the people became a people of the law on the basis of the Levitical priesthood, he means that without the Levitical sacrifices to atone for breaches of it, the law would have been completely impossible'.

(W. Barclay, 'The Letter to the Hebrews', page 78.)

(ii) The Levitical priests 'serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things' (Heb. 8. 5); 'therefore let us go to Him outside the camp' (Heb. 13. 13).

The writer wants his readers to know that 'he who would enjoy the sunshine must leave the shadow'.

(G. H. Lang, 'The Epistle to the Hebrews', page 143.)

(iii) The preacher's nightmare!

'Concerning which things we cannot now speak in detail', (Heb. 9. 5). 'Time would fail me to tell' (Heb. 11. 32).

(iv) Into the Holies of Holies 'went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood' (Heb. 9. 7).

(a) 'One tribe alone was permitted to encamp, immediately, around the Tabernacle: one family alone of that Tribe was singled out and allowed to enter the holy place: and one man alone of that family had access into the holiest, and that, only once a year, and with such awe-inspiring preparations and ceremonies as must have filled him with fear lest he should incur the judgment of the Most High'.

(A. W. Pink, 'Exodus', page 234.)

(b) 'The merit of animal blood availed for **a year** to atone for ritual irregularities and to bring **one high-priest** before the symbol of God's presence for the space of a few minutes.

'The value of the blood of Christ prevails **for ever** as atonement for all moral offences and to bring **all His people** into God's very presence, there to dwell continually'.

This eternal redemption (is) not partial, but complete; not ceremonial, but moral; not ritual, but real; not temporary, but everlasting'.

(J. Grange Radford, 'The Eternal Inheritance', page 150.)

(v) The Godhead in Hebrews 10. 4-18.

- (i) The will of the Father (Heb. 10. 4-10a).
- (ii) The work of the Son (Heb. 10. 10b-14).
- (iii) The witness of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 10. 15-18).

(vi) Abraham in Hebrews 11: 'By faith'.

- (a) 'By faith Abraham ... went out' (Heb. 11. 8).
- (b) 'By faith he sojourned in' (Heb. 11. 9).
- (c) 'By faith ... he offered up' (Heb. 11. 17.)

(vii) 'The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus ... by the blood of the eternal covenant' (Heb. 13. 20),

'The eternal covenant (Heb. 13. 20) brings an eternal redemption (Heb. 9. 12), eternal inheritance (Heb. 9. 15) and eternal salvation (Heb. 5. 9), because it rests on the offering of Christ by the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9. 14)'.

(E. Fudge, 'Our Man in Heaven: An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews', page 45.)

(viii) Some 'better' things.

- 1. A better name (Heb. 1. 4).
- 2. A better persuasion (Heb. 6. 9).
- 3. A better hope (Heb. 7. 19).

4. A better testament (Heb. 7. 22).
5. A better promise (Heb. 8. 6).
6. A better sacrifice (Heb. 9. 23).
7. A better substance (Heb. 10. 34).
8. A better resurrection (Heb. 11. 35).
9. A better country (Heb. 11. 16).
10. A better provision (Heb. 11. 40).
11. A better testimony (Heb. 12. 24).

(James Forbes, quoted in Henry Pickering, '1000 Subjects for Speakers and Students', page 85.)

'There was silence in heaven' (Rev. 8. 1).

(i) 'The silence in heaven is an expectant hush awaiting the action of God, but that is not to be just an outpouring of wrath but God's answer to the imprecatory prayers of the saints (Rev. 6. 9–11, recapitulated in Rev. 8. 3–4). Thus, there is worship (the "golden censer" with incense) behind the justice'.

(Grant R. Osborne, 'Revelation: Baker Exegetical Commentary', page 339).

(ii) 'What we have in this text (Rev. 8. 1–5) is an explanation of what has happened to the millions upon millions of prayers over the last 2,000 years as the saints have cried out again and again, "Thy kingdom come. Thy kingdom come". Not one of these prayers, prayed in faith, has been ignored. Not one is lost or forgotten. Not one has been ineffectual or pointless. They all have been gathering on the altar before the throne of God'.

(J. Piper, 'The Prayers of the Saints', accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-prayers-of-the-saints-and-the-end-of-the-world>.)

'The beginning'.

(i) 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands' (Heb. 1. 10).

(ii) 'He which made them at the beginning made them male and female' (Matt. 19. 4).

(iii) 'Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world' (Matt. 24. 21).

Hope: 'in season'.

'He that expects the fruit of his vineyard at the season (Mark 12. 2) and makes His people "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season" (Psa. 1. 3), will also give them the crown in His season.

'He that will have a word of joy spoken "in season to him that is weary" (Isa. 50. 4), will surely cause the time of joy to appear in the fittest season.

'They who are not "weary in well doing", shall, if they faint not, reap "in due season" (Gal. 6. 9).

'If God "giveth rain" even to His enemies (Matt. 5. 45)—"both the former and the latter, in his season", and "reserveth ... the appointed weeks of harvest" (Jer. 5. 24), and covenants that there shall "be day and night in their season" (Jer. 33. 20)—then surely the glorious harvest of the saints shall not miss its season.

'Doubtless, He that would not stay a day longer than His promise, but brought Israel out of Egypt on "the self-same day" when "the four hundred and thirty years were expired" (Exod. 12. 40-41), neither will He fail of one day or hour of the fittest season for His people's glory'.

(Richard Baxter, 'The Saint's Everlasting Rest', published 1824, page 49.)

Jesus made known in the breaking of bread.

Luke 24. 13-33 is an example of a chiasm structure (a narrative in which the beginning corresponds to the end, with the climax in the centre):

- a. Going 'from Jerusalem' (Luke 24. 13)
- b. Conversing together (Luke 24. 14a).
- c. Jesus joined them (Luke 24.14b)
- d. Their eyes were 'held' and they didn't recognise Jesus (Luke 24. 16)
- e. Jesus speaks with the two disciples, enters their home and reveals Himself to them (Luke 24. 17-30)
- d'. Their eyes were opened and they did recognise Jesus (Luke 24. 31a)
- c' Jesus left them (Luke 24. 31b)
- b' Conversing together (Luke 24. 32)
- a' Going 'to Jerusalem' (Luke 24. 33).

‘Slaves ... whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men ... for you serve the Lord Christ’ (Col. 3. 22-24).

‘During a visit to the NASA space centre in 1962, President John F. Kennedy noticed a janitor carrying a broom.

‘He interrupted his tour, walked over to the man and said, “Hi, I’m John Kennedy. What are you doing?”

“Well, Mr. President”, the janitor responded, *“I’m helping put a man on the moon”*”

‘To most people, this janitor was just cleaning the building. But in the larger story unfolding around him, he was helping to make history. *He perceived the big picture of his work and therefore put his heart in it*’

(John Nemo, ‘*What a NASA janitor can teach us about living a bigger life*’, accessed at ...

<http://www.bizjournals.com/bizjournals/how-to/growth-strategies/2014/12/what-a-nasa-janitor-can-teach-us.html>.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

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