

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 27 April 2026

(i) Scripture.

Those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross'.

So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, 'He saved others; He cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him. For He said, "I am the Son of God"'.

And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' ...

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'

Matthew 27. 40-54 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Truly this man was the Son of God!' (Matt. 27. 54).

No doubt, it was of God's over-ruling that the very last recorded utterance at the scene of our Lord's crucifixion was, 'Truly this man was the Son of God'. Such were the words of the centurion and those who, with him, had stood guard over Jesus that day (Matt. 27. 54).

The people who passed by had made it clear that they would not believe that Jesus was 'the Son of God' unless He came down from the cross (Matt. 27. 40). Their rulers had made it equally clear that they would not believe that He was 'the Son of God' unless God intervened directly to rescue Him (Matt. 27. 43). Yet, although He had not come down and although God had not delivered Him, the centurion openly confessed his conviction that Jesus truly was 'the Son of God'.

What, we are compelled to ask, drove the centurion to this momentous conclusion?

1. First, there were the things which he had seen (Luke 23. 47; compare Luke's emphasis on what others 'beheld' that day, Luke 23. 35, 48, 49, 55.):

(i) He had witnessed Jesus' demeanour — His compassion, composure and dignity.

(ii) He had observed the uncanny darkness at noon.

(iii) He had watched Jesus calmly recline His head before He delivered up His spirit (John 19. 30).

(iv) He had noted that His death was unexpectedly sudden (Mark 15. 44; John 19. 33).

(v) He had seen the earthquake (Matt. 27. 54), as a violent shudder ran through the creation itself when Jesus died (Matt. 27. 50-51).

2. Second, there were the things which he had heard (or not, as the case may be):

He had caught not one word of complaint or cursing from Jesus' lips, but he had heard Him:

(i) Pray for his (yes, for his) forgiveness (Luke 23. 34),

(ii) Promise paradise to a brigand (Luke 23. 43), and

(iii) Provide for His own mother (John 19. 26-27).

And then he had heard Him

(iv) call out both 'It is finished' (John 19. 30) and 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit' (Luke 23. 46). The centurion knew full well that such loud, victorious cries were far removed from the weak gasps of any ordinary dying man and I suspect that it is this which finally decided everything for him.

The centurion had seen many men die but he had never seen any other die like 'this man'.

And the realization burst upon his soul that the man whose crucifixion he had just supervised was not only no criminal but He was also no ordinary mortal—'Truly this man was the Son of God!'

(*'Day by Day: Moments with the Master'*, Precious Seed Publications, page 369—reproduced with kind permission.)

Jesus: 'the good shepherd' (John 10. 11-18).

'For the biblically literate, it would be difficult not to think of Ezekiel 34. There God denounces the false shepherds of Israel (Ezek. 34. 1-10), and repeatedly says that a day is coming when He Himself will be the shepherd of His people, feeding them, leading them, disciplining them (Ezek. 34. 11-16).

'Jesus's insistence that, so far as shepherds go, those who came before him "were thieves and robbers" (John 10. 8), would call Ezekiel 34 to mind. Then, toward the end of that Old Testament chapter, God says He will place over His flock "one shepherd"— His "servant David" (Ezek. 34. 23). Now "the good shepherd" is here, one with God (John 1. 1) yet from David's line (John 7. 42).

'In defining himself as the "good shepherd", Jesus says that "the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10. 11). This pushes the metaphor to the wall.

'In real life, a good shepherd risks his life for his sheep, and may lose it. But he doesn't voluntarily sacrifice his life for the sheep. For a start, who would look after the other sheep? And in any case, it would be inappropriate: risking your life to save the livestock is one thing, but actually choosing to die for them would be disproportionate. A human life is worth more than a flock of sheep.

'Yet in case we have not yet absorbed the incongruity of Jesus' claim, He spells it out even more clearly. He is not simply risking His life. Nor is He merely the pawn of vicious circumstances: no one can take His life from Him. He is laying it down of His own accord (John 10. 18). Indeed, the reason why His Father continues to love Him is that the Son is perfectly obedient (John 10. 17; cf. Phil. 2. 6-8)'.
(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 1, comment for 20 March.)

'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit' (Matt. 28. 19).

'The nearest approach to a formal announcement of the doctrine of the Trinity which is ... to be found in the whole compass of the New Testament ... is only incidentally introduced, and has for its main object something very different from formulating the doctrine of the Trinity.

'It is embodied in the great commission which the resurrected Lord gave His disciples to be their "marching orders" "even unto the end of the world": "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28. 19) ...

'It does not say, "In the names [*plural*] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost"; nor yet, "In the name of the Father, and in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Ghost". as if we had to deal with three separate Beings. Nor, on the other hand, does it say, "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost", as if, "the Father, Son and Holy Ghost", might be taken as merely three designations of a single person.

'With stately impressiveness, it asserts the unity of the three by combining them all within the bounds of the single name, and then throws up into emphasis the distinctness of each by introducing them in turn with the repeated article: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" ...

'The Hebrews did not think of the name, as we are accustomed to do, as a mere external symbol; but rather as the adequate expression of the innermost being of its bearer. In His name, the Being of God finds expression; and the "name" of God—"this glorious and fearful name, Jehovah thy God" (Deut. 28. 58)—was accordingly a most sacred thing, being indeed virtually equivalent to God Himself ...

'When, therefore, our Lord commanded His disciples to baptize those whom they brought to His obedience, "into the name of ...", He was using language charged with high meaning.

'He could not have been understood otherwise than as substituting for the "name" of Jehovah, this other "name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". This could not possibly have meant to His disciples anything else than that Jehovah was now to be known to them by the new "name", of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost'.

(B. B. Warfield, 'The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity', Biblical Doctrines, 1929, page 153.)

'What is man ...?'

'The dignity of man is seen in the deliberate counsel within the Triune Godhead: "Let us make man" (Gen. 1. 26).

'God's personal intervention in the creation of man contrasts strongly with the impersonal edicts which called creation into being and afterwards fashioned and furnished it. "Let there be light ... Let there be a firmament ... Thus were the heavens and the earth finished". But we do not read, "Let man be" ... No, it is, "Let us make man". So, God created man—and created him in the image of God.

'Let us notice God's special pleasure in creation when man crowned the whole. Day by day we hear God pronouncing His work (with the exception of the second day) as "good" but, after man appeared, God pronounced the whole as "very good" (Gen. 1. 31).

'Surely, too, *man's value to God is seen in the fact that, as soon as he had sinned, God sought him, and has been seeking him ever since.*

(J. H. Large, 'Man', in 'The Faith: A Symposium', edited by F. A. Tatford, page 129.)

The testimony of Mark Twain to the uniqueness of the Jewish nation.

'If statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one quarter of one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly, *the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of*, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and *his importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk* ...

'The Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Persians rose, filled the planet with sound and splendour, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greeks and Romans followed and made a vast noise, and they were gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, and have vanished.

'The Jew saw them all, survived them all ... What is the secret of his immortality?'

(Mark Twain, 'Concerning the Jews', Harpers Magazine, March 1898.)

'Both Jews and proselytes ... we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God' (Acts 2. 11).

'The Proselytes. Through the dispersed Jews, Israel began to be known by the nations of the world.

'The Gentiles met its religion also. Many felt themselves attracted by the simple, lofty faith in the one God; indeed, the Jews themselves carried on direct mission work among them, including even the Pharisees, the "separated", the most zealous representatives of their nationalism (Matt. 23. 15).

'Those who had been won were called "the added" (Greek, *proselytes*). A full proselyte was received into Judaism by circumcision and baptism by immersion'.

(Eric Sauer, 'The Dawn of World Redemption', page 179—italics original.)

'Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, to all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks to the Father' (Col. 1. 11-12).

'We usually think of God's glorious power being revealed in great feats of daring—the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, David leading a victorious army, or Paul raising the dead. But the emphasis here is on Christian character—patience, longsuffering, joyfulness, and thanksgiving.

'The inner victories of the soul are just as great, if not greater, than the public victories recorded in the annals of history.

'For David to control his temper when he was being maligned by Shimei (2 Sam. 16. 5–13) was a greater victory than his slaying of Goliath (1 Sam. 17. 51). "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city" (Prov. 16. 32 NASB).'

(Warren Wiersbe, 'Be Complete', page 39.)

The varying openings to the four Gospels.

'Each of the four Gospel writers introduces his story in a way that highlights its main themes.

(i) 'Matthew begins with a genealogy tracing Jesus's lineage from Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, through David, Israel's greatest king (Matt. 1. 1–17). This genealogy confirms that Jesus is the Messiah: the fulfilment of God's Old Testament covenants and the legitimate heir to the throne of David.

(ii) 'Mark's Gospel also begins by identifying Jesus as the Messiah whose coming fulfils scripture (Mark 1. 1–8), Mark skips any description of Jesus's birth or ancestry and instead plunges immediately into His public ministry ("immediately" [Greek *euthys*] being one of his favourite words!). For Mark, Jesus's divine authority in healing the sick, casting out demons, forgiving sins, raising the dead, and commanding nature confirm His messianic identity (Mark 1. 14–8. 29).

(iii) 'Luke begins his Gospel with a prologue that confirms his careful historical research and use of eyewitness testimony (Luke 1. 1–4). This fits well with Luke's strong historical and apologetic focus throughout Luke and Acts. Like Matthew, Luke provides a genealogy, but he traces Jesus's ancestry not just to Abraham, but all the way back to Adam, the father of the human race (Luke 3. 23–38). This fits Luke's theme that God's salvation is for all humanity, not just for Israel.

(iv) 'John introduces his Gospel with a magnificent prologue that identifies Jesus as the "Word" [Greek *Logos*] of God, the fully divine Creator of all things, who "became flesh" in order to reveal the Father and bring light and eternal life to all who believe in Him (John 1. 1–18).

'Each of these serves as an appropriate introduction to its respective Gospel, highlighting the portrait of Jesus found there and the narrative themes unique to each author'.

(M. Strauss, 'One Jesus, Four Portraits', accessed at <https://www.logos.com/grow/narrative-theology-four-gospels/>.)

'Our old self was crucified with Him ... that we would no longer be enslaved to sin' (Rom. 6. 6).

'Everything was finished by Him upon the cross. He was your surety. He suffered for you. Your sins were crucified with Him, and nailed to His cross. They were put to death when He died ...

'The law has now no more right to condemn you, a believer, than it has to condemn Him ... No sin can be crucified, either in heart or life, unless it first be pardoned in conscience, because there will be want of faith to receive the strength of Jesus, by whom alone it can be crucified. If it be not mortified in its guilt, it cannot be subdued in its power.'

(William Romaine, 'The Life, Walk, and Triumph of Faith', 1830, page 443.)

Beware these 'words'.

(i) 'These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches ...' (1 Cor. 2. 13).

(ii) 'Let no man deceive you with vain ('empty', 'void of content') words' (Eph. 5. 6).

(iii) 'Let no one beguile you with enticing words' (Col. 2. 4).

(iv) 'Neither at any time did we use flattering words' (1 Thess. 2. 5).

(iii) Go on, smile.

All his life, Hamish MacLeod had maintained that he was the most unfortunate person in the world. Nothing good ever seemed to happen to him.

And then one day ...

Hamish was rummaging through the attic of an old house which he had recently bought when he discovered an old painting and a violin. Thinking it was just possible they might be worth something, he took them to a local auction house to have them valued.

After carefully studying the painting and the violin, the valuer said, 'Mr MacLeod, I have some good news for you and some bad news'.

'Oh, tell me the good news first', Hamish said hopefully.

'Well', replied the valuer, 'The good news is that you have found both a genuine Stradivarius and an original Picasso!'

Hamish was dumbstruck. With heart pounding, when able to speak, he blurted out, 'Oh boy! I can't believe it. I just can't believe it. Things like this never happen to me!'

'Now, don't get yourself too excited, Mr MacLeod', continued the valuer ...

*'The bad news is that Antonius Stradivarius was a very bad painter
and Pablo Picasso was hopeless at making violins!'*