

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 12 October 2020

Greetings.

This is your weekly 'Musings' email from me.

Sadly, on account of COVID-19 restrictions, very many of us are currently unable to meet together and to take bread and wine each Lord's day as a means of remembering our Lord Jesus in accordance with His word.

But we should not let this physical loss rob us of the opportunity (and the joy) of 'an affectionate calling of the Person Himself to mind' (W. E. Vine) each Lord's day.

We may not be able on that day to 'proclaim the Lord's death' in eating the bread and drinking the cup (1 Cor. 11. 26), but we can still ponder His death.

To that end, you may find the attached Word document to be of some help.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

Of the angels He says: 'Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire'.

But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions'.

And: 'You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak you will fold them up, and they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will not fail'.

Hebrews 1. 7-12 (*New Kings James version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'For us', the Lord Jesus:

- (i) Died (Rom. 5. 8; 1 Thess. 5. 10).
- (ii) Was delivered up (Rom. 8. 32).
- (iii) Makes intercession (Rom. 8. 34).
- (iv) Was sacrificed (1 Cor. 5. 7).
- (v) Was made sin (2 Cor. 5. 21).
- (vi) Was made a curse (Gal. 3. 13).
- (vii) Gave Himself (Eph. 5. 2; Tit. 2. 14).
- (viii) Entered within the veil (Heb. 6. 20).
- (ix) Appears now in God's presence (Heb. 9. 24).
- (x) Consecrated a new and living way (Heb. 10. 20).

Object lessons for us from God's creatures.

(i) *Not to be anxious* – from *birds in general*: 'Do not worry about your life, what you will eat ... look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them' (Matt. 6. 25-26).

(ii) *Not to be fearful* – from *sparrows* which fall: 'Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God ... Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows' (Luke 12. 6-7).

(iii) *Not to be lazy* – from *the ants*: 'Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise' (Prov. 6. 6).

(iv) *Not to be easily deterred* – from *spiders/lizards*: 'The spider (probably 'the lizard') you can take in your hands, yet it is in kings' palaces' (Prov. 30. 28).

'Not to ... but' (seven occasions when the Lord Jesus first stated the negative and then stated the positive).

(i) 'Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil' (Matt. 5. 17).

(ii) 'I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance' (Matt. 9. 13).

- (iii) 'Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword' (Matt. 10. 34).
- (iv) 'The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve' (Matt. 20. 28).
- (v) 'The Son of man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them' (Luke 9. 56).
- (vi) 'I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me' (John 6. 38).
- (vii) 'I did not come to judge the world but to save the world' (John 12. 47).

'It is not angels that He helps' (Heb. 2. 16 ESV),

'Behold the love of Christ, He came not to the fallen angels, but to mankind.

Among the several wonders of the (magnet) it is not the least, that it will not draw gold or pearl, but despising these, it draws the iron to it, one of the most inferior metals.

Thus Christ leaves angels, those noble spirits, the gold and the pearl, and comes to poor sinful man, and draws him into His embraces'.

(Thomas Watson, '*Body of Divinity*', page 185.)

I have read (but am unable to vouch for the truth of the stories):

(i) of a printer's error in the programme of a performance of Handel's Messiah. It listed the Hallelujah Chorus as 'The Lord God Omnipotent resigneth!'

But God has not resigned. As the Chorus correctly claims, He reigneth! (Rev. 19. 6)

Rest assured, whatever is happening in the world, God has the situation well and truly under control.

(ii) that C. H. Spurgeon once saw on a weathercock above a barn the words, 'God is love'. Mr Spurgeon asked the owner of the barn if that meant that God's love is as changeable as the wind.

'No', the owner of the barn replied, 'it means that *whichever way the wind blows, God is love*'.

'Uncommon faith'.

Speaking about George Müller, Charles Spurgeon said, 'he acts not upon common sense, but upon something higher than common sense—upon uncommon faith. Oh that we had that uncommon faith to take God at his word! He cannot and He will not permit the man that trusteth Him to be ashamed or confounded'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, '*True Prayer – True Power*', a sermon preached on August 12, 1860, The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons, Vol. 6.)

'They may know you, the only true God' (John 17. 3), but 'His greatness is unsearchable' (Psa. 145. 3).

'The biblical God can surprise us. He can puzzle us. I don't mean that He behaves in an arbitrary way or on mere whim. It is rather that we cannot expect to fathom His reasons. There is a necessary distinction between knowing God and understanding God'.

(Richard Bauckham, an interview with Ben Witherington III about Mr Bauckham's book 'Who is God?')

God's will.

'To understand the will of God is the *greatest knowledge*, to find the will of God is the *greatest discovery*, and to do the will of God is the *greatest achievement*'.

(Anonymous.)

God's will is best.

'If God would concede me His omnipotence for twenty-four hours, you would see how many changes I would make in the world. But if He gave me His wisdom too, *I would leave things as they are*'.

(Jacques-Marie Louis Monsabré: 19th century rector of the cathedral in Notre Dame.)

(See the attached 'Omnipotence and wisdom' picture.)

'While he was yet speaking':

(i) Job ... messengers came with tragic news for him (Job 1. 16-18).

(ii) Abraham's servant ... Rebecca came in answer to his prayer (Gen. 24. 15).

(iii) The Lord Jesus ... Judas came to betray Him (Mark 14. 43).

(iv) Peter ... the Holy Spirit came on the household of Cornelius (Acts 10. 44).

The extent of Paul's love for others.

The apostle was willing to *forego even the blessings of heaven* for a time for the sake of other Christians (Phil. 1. 22-26), and was willing to *suffer even the judgement of God* for the sake of his unbelieving countrymen (Rom. 9. 3).

Ten blessings the believer enjoys on account of the blood of Christ.

(i) Forgiven (Matt. 26. 28).

(ii) Purchased (Acts 20. 28).

(iii) Justified (Rom. 5. 9).

(iv) Redeemed (Eph. 1. 7).

- (v) Brought near (Eph. 2. 13).
- (vi) Peace (Col. 1. 20).
- (vii) Purged (Heb. 9. 14).
- (viii) Sanctified (Heb. 13. 12).
- (ix) Cleansed (1 John 1. 7).
- (x) Victorious (Rev. 12. 11).

'The blood of sprinkling'

'He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times' (Lev. 16. 14).

'The blood was to be sprinkled before the mercy-seat ... seven times because it was for the eye of man. Once was enough for the eye of God'.

(E. Dennett, *'The Efficacy of the Blood of Christ'*, The Christian Friend, vol. 8, 1881, page 48.)

Difficult arithmetic, COVID-19, and breathing.

In his address to the philosophers at Athens, the apostle Paul declared that God 'gives to all life, breath, and all things' (Acts 17. 25).

It has been said that *the most difficult arithmetic for many of us is the ability to count our blessings.*

A coronavirus story which came out of Italy recently illustrates the point well:

'A 93-year-old man was stricken with COVID-19 and in spite of his age he somehow survived. Upon being discharged from the hospital, he was presented with a very large bill. Part of it was for payment for the ventilator which he had been put on for one day.

Reading the amount that was due, the old man began to cry. The hospital felt a sense of compassion and told him not to worry – surely something could be worked out to reduce the cost to something more manageable. The old man's response made the hospital workers weep.

The old man explained, "I don't cry because of the money I have to pay. Thankfully I am able to afford it. I cry for another reason. I cry because I've just come to realize after all these many years on earth I've been breathing God's air for 93 years, yet I have never had to pay for it. It seems it takes over €500 to use a ventilator in the hospital for one day. Do you know how much I owe God?"

"Why haven't I ever truly thanked Him all the days of my life for the miracle of this divine gift which I took for granted?"

(Source: <https://www.aish.com/ci/s/Sukkot-and-Corona-Three-Major-Messages.html>.)

When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.
(Johnson Oatman, Jr.)

Detailed notes. [See the attached Word document, 'Remember me'.](#)

(iii) Go on, smile.

1. An elderly Jew, Joseph Cohen, occasionally liked to indulge in eating forbidden meat. One day, he took a taxi to a restaurant on the other side of town where he was sure that nobody would know him.

He took a table near the kitchen, and placed his order. But after a short time, who should come in, but his local Rabbi. Rabbi Kushner had just popped in to use the public pay phone.

Joseph was horrified when his Rabbi recognised him and came over for a chat.

And then, just as Joseph was trying to think of a good excuse for being in a non-Kosha restaurant, his worst fears were realised: his food order arrived – a whole roast suckling pig with an apple stuffed in its mouth. Seeing Rabbi Kushner's look of disbelief, Joseph immediately exclaimed, *'Funny way they have of serving fruit here!'*

(See the attached 'Oh no, we forgot the apples' picture.)

2. Dai Griffiths went to see his lawyer to have him draw up a will for him. Nervously, Dai admitted, 'I know that I need to draw up a will, but I really have no idea how to go about it. Is it very difficult?'

'I assure you', the lawyer said, 'you can safely leave everything to me. There is really nothing for you to worry about'.

'You must be joking', replied Dai, 'What kind of lawyer are you, after all? I'm ready to pay you your fee, but *I'm certainly not leaving everything to you!*'

"If God would concede to me His omnipotence for twenty-four hours, you would see how many changes I would make in this world. But if He gave me His wisdom, too, I would leave things as they are."

- J.M.L. Monsabre -



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