

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 21 December 2020

Greetings.

Four weeks ago, I promised (or threatened, depending on how you view the Musings) to be back with you today.

Well, here I am. This is your Monday 'Musings' email from me.

Hopefully, it will give you something to chew on along with the turkey at the end of the week.

And that reference to turkey reminds me of something which I read about William M. Evarts, the 19th century U.S. Secretary of State and U.S. Attorney General.

Apparently, Mr Evarts began a Thanksgiving dinner speech with the words, 'You have been giving your attention to a turkey stuffed with sage; you are now about to consider a sage stuffed with turkey'!

I close by repeating the opening sentence of my earlier email Christmas card:

Wishing you a blessed and truly wonder-filled Christmas season.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privately.

But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, fear not to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins'.

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel', which is translated, 'God with us'.

Matthew 1. 18-23 (*New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Come to'.

At this Christmas season, let us not spend our time complaining, 'Just look **what** our world has come to'; rather let us spend our time exclaiming, 'Just look **who** has come to our world'!
(John 1. 9; 3. 19; 6. 14; 11. 27; 12. 46; 18. 37; 1 Tim. 1. 15; Heb. 10. 5.)

'In the Virgin's womb'.

Man in God's own image made;
Man by Satan's wiles betrayed;
Man on whom corruption preyed;
Shut out from hope of life and of salvation.
Today Christ maketh him a new creation
For He hath triumphed gloriously.

For the Maker, when the foe
Wrought His creature death and woe
Bowed the heavens, came below;
*And in the Virgin's womb His dwelling making,
Became true man, our very nature taking,*
For He hath triumphed gloriously."
(Cosmos of Jerusalem. *Written in 760 A.D. and translated by J. M. Neale.*)

'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. 8. 9).

The Lord Jesus was willing to pay for our riches with His own.

Thirteen scriptural reasons why the Lord Jesus is said to have 'come':

- (i) To fulfil the law and the prophets (Matt. 5. 17).
- (ii) To bring division (Matt. 10. 34; Luke 12. 49-51).
- (iii) To serve and to give His life (Matt. 20. 28; Mark 10. 45).
- (iv) To preach (Mark 1. 38).
- (v) To call sinners to repentance (Mark 2. 17; cf. Luke 19. 10).
- (vi) To do the will of the Father (John 6. 38; Hebrews 10. 7).
- (vii) To give eternal life (John 6. 51).
- (viii) To bring judgement (John 9. 39).
- (ix) To bring abundant life (John 10.10).
- (x) To suffer and die (John 12. 24-27).
- (xi) To bring light to those in darkness (John 12. 46).
- (xii) To bear witness to the truth (John 18. 37).
- (xiii) To save sinners (1 Tim. 1. 15).

And it doesn't bear thinking about how things would be if He 'had not come' (John 15. 22)!

Why Jesus came.

He didn't come to liberate Israel from Rome, or He would have come carrying a sword.

He didn't come to raise men's living standards, or He would have come carrying bags of gold.

He didn't come to provide men with education, or He would have come carrying books.

He came to save, and so He took a body that, in it, He might bear our sins (Heb. 10. 5; 1 Pet. 2. 24).

John Newton on John 3. 16.

'We live in the midst of wonders. Everything which our eyes can view in earth or sea or sky – from the grass in the field to the glorious sun in the firmament – proclaim to an attentive observer a wonder-working God.

Wonderful like is the conduct of the divine providence, in supporting, directing, controlling and overruling the various innumerable concerns of mankind.

But there is a wonder beyond all that appears in the visible creation or in common providence – the wonderful Love of God.

God loved so beyond expression, so beyond description, that He gave His Son. May this amazing instance of the love of God be so impressed upon our hearts by His Holy Spirit, as to enkindle in us a flame of love to Him who has thus loved us.

Three particulars the words offer ... concerning this love:

1. the object – the world
2. the design – eternal life
3. the means – gave His Son

... If we had been told that the sufferings and obedience of an angel were necessary, we could hardly have dared to hope that God would give one of those glorious creatures for the sake of sinners. But what is an angel or thousands of angels to the Son of His love?'

(John Newton, 'Discourse on John 3. 16', Cowper & Newton Museum, 714(2) No. 4.)

'White as snow'.

It is far better to have one's 'sin' made as white as snow (Isa. 1. 18), than to have one's 'skin' made as white as snow (2 Kings 5. 27).

'By Him' in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

(i) 'God ... hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son ... by whom also He made the worlds' (Heb. 1. 1-2).

(ii) 'He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him' (Heb. 7. 25).

(iii) 'You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him' (Heb. 12. 5).

(iv) 'By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name' (Heb. 13. 15)..

Praise in the Book of Psalms.

'In Hebrew the name of the Psalter is the "Book of Praises". Each book of the Psalter ends with praise:

Book 1: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen" (Psa. 41. 13).

Book 2: "Blessed be His glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with His glory! Amen and Amen!" (Ps. 72. 19).

Book 3: "Blessed be the Lord forever! Amen and Amen" (Psa. 89. 52).

Book 4: “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, ‘Amen!’ Praise the Lord!” (Psa. 106. 48)

Book 5: “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!” (Psa. 150. 6).

While all the books contain psalms of praise, Book 5 in particular abounds, showing that the Psalter culminates in praise. Indeed, the last five psalms of Book 5 are psalms that begin and end with the call to praise, showing us the fullness and perfection of praise’.

(W. Robert Godfrey, *‘Learning to love the Psalms’*; Kindle Locations 647-656.)

‘Seven times a day I praise you’ (Psa. 119. 164).

‘Whenever I read this verse, I think of a visit to Chicago.

It was a cold, blustery day, and I was waiting for a friend. Looking for a place out of the wind, I saw an antique clock shop. The proprietor noticed immediately that I wasn’t the well-heeled type looking for an antique, just a little warmth, and left me alone.

But a few minutes later, several of the old clocks began chiming. I checked my watch; it was five minutes to the hour. Perhaps feeling a little superior after being ignored, I said, “You need to get those clocks fixed”.

“There’s nothing wrong with them”, he replied. “Haven’t you heard of prayer clocks?” I hadn’t.

When the clocks chimed each hour, people stopped for five minutes to pray.

Let’s see, in an eight-hour workday, that would be seven times!’

(J. B. Nicholson Jr., *‘Petition Mission: 23 November’*.)

Times of need and of plenty.

God does not forsake us in our time of need (Heb. 4. 16), even if we forget Him in our time of plenty (Deut. 6. 10-12)

Experiences.

The Lord doesn’t promise to take us out of our bitter experiences, but He will take the bitterness out of our experiences.

The benefits of affliction and loss.

‘God tempers our afflictions, severe though they may seem to be; and though, apparently, He strikes us with the blows of a cruel one, yet there is a depth unutterable of infinite love in every stroke of His hand ... The Lord has ways of weaning us from the visible and the tangible, and bringing us to live upon the invisible and the real, in order to prepare us for that next stage, that better life, that higher place, where we shall really deal with eternal things only. God blows out our candles, and makes us find our light in Him’.

(C. H. Spurgeon, *‘A Little Sanctuary’*, a sermon preached on 1 January 1888 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.)

‘To live is Christ, and to die is gain’ (Phil. 1. 21).

Paul did not say, ‘to live is gain, and to die is Christ’!

And remember, it is only because the believer has first gained Christ Himself (Phil. 3. 8), that death is gain for the believer.

That we should be ‘no longer’ (Greek: ‘μηκετι’): (Scriptures quoted from J. N. Darby’s ‘New Translation’.)

(i) ‘Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should **no longer serve sin**’ (Rom. 6. 6).

(ii) ‘Let us **no longer** therefore judge one another; but judge ye this rather, not to put a stumbling-block ... before his brother’ (Rom. 14. 13).

(iii) ‘He died for all, that they who live should **no longer live to themselves**, but to Him who died for them and has been raised’ (2 Cor. 5. 15).

(iv) ‘In order that we may be **no longer babes**, tossed and carried about by every wind of that teaching which is in the sleight of men’ (Eph. 4. 14).

(v) ‘This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye should **no longer walk as the rest of the nations walk** in the vanity of their mind’ (Eph. 4. 17).

(vi) ‘He that has suffered in the flesh has done with sin, **no longer to live** the rest of his time in the flesh to men’s lusts, but to God’s will’ (1 Pet. 4. 2).

‘Gird yourselves with humility’ (1 Pet. 5. 5).

‘Many would be scantily clad if clothed in their humility’.

(Author unknown.)

Detailed notes. [See the attached ‘Christmas’ Word document, ‘Fear not, Joseph’.](#)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Two 'phoney' smiles.

1. The only pay phone in the area was in use, so the woman stood back from the phone-booth politely to wait until it was free.

Minutes went by, however, and she couldn't help noticing that the man in the booth was just standing there, holding the handset silently. He just stared blankly at the back of the booth, not saying anything.

Finally, her patience ran out. She stepped forward, opened the door of the booth, tapped the man on his shoulder, and asked if she could please use the phone.

Putting his free hand over the receiver quickly, the man responded, 'Now, hold your horses ... *'I'm talking to my wife'*.

2. (This narrative has been reproduced from Reader's Digest.)

When a customer left his mobile phone in my store, I scrolled through his saved numbers, stopped at "Mum", and pressed to send.

The owner's mother answered, and I told her what had happened.

"Don't worry", she said, "I'll easily take care of it".

A minute later, the mobile phone rang.

"It's Mum here, son", the voice said. "*You left your mobile phone in the convenience store*".

Separately, see the attached seasonal pictures:

(i) The turkey lamp.

(ii) The thankful turkey.

