

## Malcolm's Monday Musings : 28 December 2020

Greetings.

This is your Monday 'Musings' email from me.

I hardly need to tell you that today we stand on the threshold of a new year.

It is conventionally thought that the month of 'January' derives its name from 'Janus'. According to ancient Roman religion and myth, Janus was considered to be (among other functions) the god who presided over beginnings and endings. For this reason, he was usually depicted as having two faces which look in opposite directions, signifying that he looked to both the past and the future at the same time.

Certainly, the closing days of a calendar year provide you and me with a fitting opportunity to look back on the past year and to look forward to the next.

As believers, we might profitably dwell on the closing words of Joseph Hart's short hymn, 'How good is the God we adore':

*'We'll praise Him for all that is past  
and trust Him for all that's to come'.*

Don't miss, please, that word 'praise'.

No, we will not complain and grouse about any of the unwelcome (but often unimportant) restrictions and inconveniences of 2020. 'We'll *praise Him for all that is past*'.

And don't miss, also, that word 'trust'.

No, we'll not succumb to senseless anxiety, and fret about virus variations or vaccines, or whatever, in 2021. We'll '*trust Him for all that's to come*'.

And when you are tempted to bite your nails about the many unpredictable newsflashes of the coming year, you will do well to remember the words of the psalmist: 'The righteous will never be moved ... he is *not afraid of bad news*' (Psa.112. 6-7: ESV).

Today's *short* attached Word document focuses on our immanent entrance, God willing, into the coming year. (I have also attached [the audio recording of the words which are quoted at the beginning of that document.](#))

### Happy New Year.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

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#### (i) Scripture.

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand ...  
I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'

Isaiah 41. 10, 13 (*The New King James Version*)

#### (ii) Food for thought.

##### ***Elisabeth and Mary: reproach and shame.***

*Elisabeth*, a wife of many years, suffered shame and reproach because she had never been pregnant ('Thus the Lord has done for me to take away my reproach', Luke 1. 25; cf. v. 7).

*Mary*, a young virgin, faced the possibility of shame and reproach because she had become pregnant ('she was found to be with child ... and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly', Matt. 1. 18-19).

##### ***Ten occasions when our Lord's 'looks' are noted in Mark's gospel.***

(i) 'He ... looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts' (Mark 3. 5).

- (ii) 'He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!' (Mark 3. 34).
- (iii) 'He looked round about to see her that had done this thing' (Mark 5. 32).
- (iv) 'When He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples' Mark 6. 41).
- (v) 'Looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened' (Mark 7. 34).
- (vi) 'When He had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get behind me, Satan' (Mark 8. 33).
- (vii) 'Jesus looking on him loved him, and said unto him, One thing you lack: go thy way, sell whatsoever you have, and give to the poor' (Mark 10. 21).
- (viii) 'Jesus looked round about, and said to His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' (Mark 10. 23).
- (ix) 'Jesus looking on them said, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible'. (Mark 10. 27).
- (x) 'Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when He had looked round about on all things ... He went out to Bethany with the twelve' (Mark 11. 11).

### **The Mount of Olives.**

- (i) The One who left the Mount of Olives on a colt before His death and resurrection (Matt. 21. 1-8), left the Mount of Olives in a cloud after His death and resurrection (Acts 1. 9-12)
- (ii) The One who 'sat on' the Mount of Olives at His first advent and taught His disciples about the deliverance of the remnant of Israel at 'the consummation' of the present age (Matt. 24. 3, 27-31), will 'stand on' the Mount of Olives at His second advent to provide a way of escape for the remnant of Israel from their enemies (Zech. 14. 4).

### **What kind of King?**

'He was outwardly divested to the utmost degree of everything that the world considered conducive to kingship. He had no bejewelled crown or golden sceptre; no palatial residence or royal possessions; no retinue of servants, or revenue from subjects; and no army ranks or attendant guards. What a sorry spectacle, disdained by rulers, derided by priests, despised by the people, and deserted by His disciples! While in this wretched set of circumstances, Pilate said to Him, "Art Thou a king then?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth" (John 18. 37) ... Christ is the King of a kingdom of spiritual truth'.

(C. J. Rolls, '*His Glorious Name (Book 5)*', Kindle Edition. Location 3047-3058).

### **'God ... brought again from the dead our Lord ... by the blood of the eternal covenant' (Heb. 13. 20).**

'At first it seems strange to think of God raising up Jesus through Jesus' blood, through Jesus' death. But the point is probably that the eternal covenant inaugurated by Jesus' successful death, His completed sacrifice, His perfect atonement, expressed in His triumphant cry "It is finished!", is the ... bedrock that means it is right for God to raise up Jesus and vindicate Him'.

(D. A. Carson, '*For the love of God*', 18 November.)

### **'Tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you' (Mark 16. 7).**

This command to 'tell' is significant in the Gospel according to Mark. For, before this moment, not only the demons (Mark 1. 25, 34; 3. 12), but the disciples and those who were healed had been instructed not to tell others what they knew or what had happened (Mark 1. 44; 5. 43; 7. 36; 8. 26, 30; 9. 9).

### **'The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible' (1 Cor. 15. 52).**

'When James Prince Lee, first "Bishop of Manchester" was buried, it was not with the usual pomp in a cathedral. His grave lies in a small country churchyard in the village of Heaton Mersey. A simple marker records his vital statistics, but at the head of the stone is one Greek word, *salpisei*, translated in our English Bible as "the trumpet shall sound"'.  
(J. B. Nicholson, '*Uplook Ministries: Petition Mission*', 6 July 2020.)

### **The prodigal returns; 'no more strangers ... but fellowcitizens with the saints' (Eph. 2. 19).**

'Note the marvellous change in the heart of that elder brother, the erstwhile bigot, Saul of Tarsus! Listen to that Hebrew of the Hebrews, as he welcomes the prodigal son home'.  
(Ruth Paxson, '*The Wealth, Walk and Warfare of the Christian*', pages 68-69.)

### **Blessings which will never pass away.**

According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, believers have:

- (i) 'a possession' in heaven which is not only 'better' than any material possession, but which abides (Heb. 10. 34);
- (ii) 'a kingdom which cannot be shaken' (Heb. 12. 28); and
- (iii) a Saviour who is 'the same yesterday, and today, and for ever (Heb. 13. 8).

Praise God, we have (i) an abiding possession, (ii) an unshakable kingdom, and (iii) an unchanging Saviour.

**'They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels' (Mal. 3. 17).**

I enjoy the story documented by Valerius Maximus, a Roman compiler of historical anecdotes, who wrote during the reign of Tiberias Caesar.

He wrote of one Cornelia, the daughter of the great Roman commander Scipio who had defeated Hannibal and the army of Carthage. Cornelia was, we are told, a noble woman and an excellent mother.

The writer claims that a lady from Campania, on a visit to Cornelia's home, showed Cornelia her beautiful jewels, and asked Cornelia if she might see Cornelia's jewels.

Cornelia kept the lady talking until her sons came home from school, and, pointing to them, exclaimed, *'These are my jewels'*.

[Source: Anton and Adams, *'A Classical Dictionary'*, page 376 (citing Valerius Maximus, *'Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri IX, IV, 4'*.)]

It strikes me that, if, in the coming ages, some heavenly principality or power should venture to ask God to display His jewels, He wouldn't point to any precious metals or rare gems of earth or of the Holy Jerusalem (Rev. 21. 18-21). He would point to you and me, and declare, *'These are my jewels'*.

Fanciful, you say? Listen to the apostle Paul: 'that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2. 7).

See the attached 'God's jewels' picture.

**'The messenger of Satan to buffet me ... My strength is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor. 12. 7, 9).**

'People lose much when they forget that Christ uses Satan to guard them from sin ... Satan gave Paul the thorn in the flesh. Christ's purpose is to perfect His strength in his servant's weakness. The whole scene down here is under His hand; and not only are the difficulties here for us to get through, but they are arranged by Christ that He may glorify Himself by taking you through them'.

(G. V. Wigram, *'Weakness and Strength'*, The Christian Friend, 1881, page 297.)

**The exceeding sinfulness of sin.**

"The very animals whose smell is most offensive to us have no idea that they are offensive, and are not offensive to one another. And man, fallen man, I believe, can have no just idea what a vile thing sin is in the sight of that God whose handiwork is absolutely perfect'.

(J. C. Ryle, *'Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties and Roots'*, pages 8-9.)

**'The riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering' (Rom. 2. 4).**

'By sin we affect independence of our Creator, affront the authority of our righteous Lawgiver, and are guilty of base and horrid ingratitude against our greatest and kindest Benefactor.

"If you could form a little creature and make it live, if it hated you and opposed you, slighted your kindness, and took a pleasure in displeasing you, would you not soon be weary of it, and, instead of feeding and taking care of it, be provoked to tread it under your feet?

'But, O the patience of God! Though He could destroy rebellious men much more easily than you can kill a spider or a beetle, yet He waits to be gracious, and has so loved them as to send His own Son to die that they may live!'

(John Newton, *'The Posthumous Works of the Late Rev. John Newton'*, Letter XIII – to his thirteen-year-old daughter. The letter is dated 'January 27, 1783'.)

**Detailed notes.** [See the attached Word document, 'Put your hand ...'](#)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Two restaurant smiles.

1. An elderly Welsh couple was on holiday in North Wales. They decided to have a meal in an attractive-looking Chinese restaurant.

They were talking away in Welsh when a young Chinese waiter, only one year in the UK, came over to their table. He asked them in fluent, impeccable Welsh if they were enjoying their holiday, and then took their order.

The couple were amazed. When the waiter left their table, the wife spoke for both of them when she asked, 'How did he ever learn such perfect Welsh?'

Later, having finished their meal, they went to the counter to pay the bill. When there, they asked the restaurant manager, 'Wherever did our waiter learn such excellent Welsh?'

The manager looked around and leaned over the counter so that no one else could hear. 'Shhhh', he whispered. *'He thinks we're teaching him English'*.

2. John and Sylvia were going out for an evening meal at a restaurant. They phoned for a taxi, got dressed in their finest clothes, and put their cat Mabel outside for the night.

When the taxi arrived, they switched off most of the lights, but, before they could close and lock the front door, their cat ran back into the house.

The couple didn't want the cat shut in the house while they were away, so John went back in and rushed upstairs chasing the cat, while Sylvia went out to the taxi.

Not wanting it known that the house would be left empty, Sylvia told the taxi driver, 'My husband will only be a few minutes. He's just gone upstairs to say goodbye to my mother'.

About five minutes later, John got into the cab.

'I'm sorry I took so long', he apologised to the taxi driver. *'That silly old Mabel was hiding under the bed, and I had to poke her hard with a coat hanger to get her to come out'.*

*Malachi 3:17*

***You Are God's  
Precious  
Jewels!***

