

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 15 November 2021.

Greetings.

Please see below your weekly 'Musings' from me.

Happy reading

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

This past Wednesday marked the anniversary of the date in 1871 of one of the most famous meetings in recent centuries. For, according to Henry Stanley's journal, it was 150 years ago, on 10th November 1871, that he greeted the pioneer missionary David Livingstone with the now famous words, "Dr Livingstone, I presume?" **[(*)]**

This is Henry Stanley's own account of that memorable meeting on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in present-day Tanzania, Africa:

'I pushed back the crowds, and, passing from the rear, walked down a living avenue of people, until I came in front of the semicircle of Arabs, before which stood the white man with the grey beard.

'As I advanced slowly towards him, I noticed he was pale, looking weary, had a grey beard, wore a bluish cloth cap with a faded gold band round it, had on a red-sleeved waistcoat, and a pair of grey tweed trousers.

'I would have run to him, only I was a coward in the presence of such a mob--would have embraced him, only, he being an Englishman, I did not know how he would receive me; so, I ... walked deliberately to him, took off my hat, and said: "**Dr Livingstone, I presume?**"

"Yes," said he, with a kind smile, lifting his cap slightly. I replaced my hat on my head, and he puts on his cap, and we both grasp hands, and I then say aloud: "I thank God, Doctor, I have been permitted to see you". He answered, "I feel thankful that I am here to welcome you".'

(Henry Morton Stanley, '*How I found Livingstone*' {published in the summer of 1872}, pages 411-412.)

That meeting took place just 18 months before David Livingstone's departure to be with Christ (on 1st May 1873); characteristically, he died kneeling in prayer.

[(*)] In his journal, Dr Livingstone reports the famous meeting as having taken place earlier, around 14th October that year. But, later in his journal, he acknowledged that his dates were as much as 'twenty-one days too fast in my reckoning'. (Horace Waller, '*The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central Africa, from 1865 to His Death*', 1875, pages 400 and 410.) Sadly, many biographers have failed to note this and have, therefore, wrongly dated the meeting as taking place over two weeks earlier than it did.]

I suppose that 'Dr Livingstone' has many claims to fame. For example:

- (i) he narrowly survived death after being mauled by a lion;
- (ii) his body was eventually laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, London;
- (iii) by means of his writings, he stirred up considerable public support against African slavery; and
- (iv) that which was perhaps his most awe-inspiring discovery, the great waterfall '*Mosi-oa-Tunya*' ('The Smoke That Thunders'), which he renamed, 'Victoria Falls', in honour of the then Queen.

But I want us to focus attention rather on a few of his sayings and expressions which have been a special blessing to me:

(i) his journal entry on 22nd May 1853:

'I will place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of Christ. If anything will advance the interests of that kingdom, it shall be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping of it I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time and eternity.

'May grace and strength sufficient to enable me to adhere faithfully to this resolution be imparted to me, so that in truth, not in name only, all my interests ... may be identified with His cause'.

(David Livingstone, quoted in W. G. Blaikie, '*The Personal Life of David Livingstone*', 1880, page 116.)

(ii) his journal entry on 19th March 1872:

'Birthday. My Jesus, my King, my life, my all; ***I again dedicate my whole self to Thee.*** Accept me, and grant, O Gracious Father, that ere this year is gone I may finish my task. In Jesus' name I ask it. Amen, so let it be'.

(David Livingstone, quoted in John S. Roberts, *'The Life and Explorations of David Livingstone'*, 1874, Page 487.)

(iii) (a) 'Mr Stanley used some very strong arguments in favour of my going home ... My daughter Agnes says, "Much as I wish you to come home, ***I would rather that you finished your work to your own satisfaction*** than return merely to gratify me".

'Rightly and nobly said, my darling Nannie. Vanity whispers pretty loudly, "She is a chip of the old block"'.
(David Livingstone, quoted in Horace Waller, *'The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central Africa, from 1865 to His Death'*, 1875, page 410.)

(iii) (b) his journal entry on 25th March 1873:

'Nothing earthly will make me give up my work in despair. I encourage myself in my Lord my God, and go forward'.

(David Livingstone, quoted in John S. Roberts, *'The Life and Explorations of David Livingstone'*, 1874, Page 576.)

(iv) 'For my own part, I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? ... Away with the word in such a view, and with such a thought! ***It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege.***

'Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink, but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in, and for, us. ***I never made a sacrifice'***.

(David Livingstone, 'Lecture delivered before the University of Cambridge, in the Senate-House, on Friday, 4th December, 1857', page 23.)

Humbling in the extreme!

(i) Scripture

As they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you".

But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.

And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have".

When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

But while they still did not believe for joy, and marvelled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?"

So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took *it* and ate in their presence.

Luke 24. 36-43 (*The New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

Abraham tested.

For his first test, Abraham was called on to surrender his 'father's house' (Gen. 12. 1; cf. Acts 7. 2-3); for his last test, Abraham was called on to surrender his son's life (Gen. 22. 2).

'Under' trees.

(i) **Abraham** under an oak tree: 'the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre ... and (Abraham) stood by them under the tree, and they did eat' (Gen. 18. 1, 8). The tree of revelation (Gen. 18. 10, 14).

(ii) **Deborah** under a palm tree: 'she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel' (Judg. 4. 5). The tree of justice (Judg. 4. 4-5).

(iii) **Saul** under a pomegranate tree: 'Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah *under* a pomegranate tree which is in Migron' (1 Sam. 14. 2). The tree of comfortable inactivity (contrast 1 Sam. 14. 1).

(iv) **Elijah** under a juniper tree: 'he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down *under* a juniper tree' (1 Kings 19. 4). The tree of despondency (1 Kings 19. 4, 10, 14).

(v) **The Shulamite** under an apple tree: 'As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down *under* his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste' (Song of Songs 2. 3). The tree of love (Song of Songs 2. 4-5).

(vi) **Nathanael** under a fig tree: 'Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were *under* the fig tree, I saw you' (John 1. 48). The tree of identification (John 1. 48-49).

The 'ribband of blue'.

'Speak unto the children of Israel ... that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband ('a thread') of blue' (Num. 15. 38).

'The story is told of a young dauphin, or crown prince, of France, who was placed under the care of an English tutor that he might be educated for his high and lofty station. The tutor often found it very difficult to control the young prince, who was very high-spirited and independent.

'Not possessing the authority to administer punishment to one in such an exalted position, the tutor finally hit upon a plan whereby he hoped to insure better behaviour.

'One morning he produced a purple rosette, which he fastened upon the jacket of the prince, explaining that as it was the royal colour, it was to be worn as an evidence of his regal station. "If", said the tutor, "I ever find you behaving in an unprincely manner, I shall simply point to the rosette, and you will understand".

'It proved to be a most effective method of discipline. Occasionally, the prince would indulge in an outburst of unseemly language or act in an unworthy manner. The silent appeal to the purple was enough to bring him to his senses and to procure an apology and a promise of better self-control in the future.

'So, believers today are responsible to behave in accordance with their heavenly relationship—to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith" they are called (Eph. 4. 1). The ribband of blue is to be seen upon all our garments as we walk through this world to the glory of God'.

(H. A. Ironside, *'Illustrations of Bible Truth'*, pages 103-104.)

God's sevenfold pleasure.

(i) To bless Israel: 'Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel' (Num. 24. 1).

(ii) To bruise His Servant: 'It pleased the Lord to bruise Him' (Isa. 53. 10).

(iii) To save, through the preaching of the gospel, those who believe: 'It pleased God ... to save them that believe' (1 Cor. 1. 21).

(iv) To place each member in the church: 'God set the members every one of them in the body, as it pleased Him' (1 Cor. 12. 18).

(v) To form each type of grain: 'God gives it a body as it has pleased Him' (1 Cor. 15. 38).

(vi) To reveal His Son in and to those who are converted: 'It pleased God....to reveal His Son in me' (Gal. 1. 15-16).

(vii) To cause His fulness to reside in Christ: 'It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell' (Col. 1. 19).

'He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds' (Psalm 147. 3).

Note that these words are sandwiched between the statement, 'The Lord builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel' (Psa. 147. 2), and the statement, 'He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name' (Psa. 147. 4).

Let the wonder of this sink in: that the One who shapes history ... that the One who created every last star ... is the self-same One who stoops to heal a person's broken heart.

'He changes the times and the seasons' (Dan. 2. 21).

'In other words, He determines when in history events will happen and how long each process or phase of history will last'.

(Thomas Constable, *'Expository Notes'*, on Dan. 2. 21.)

'7Up'.

(i) *Faith looking up*: 'in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up' (Psa. 5. 3).

(ii) *Believers mounting up*: 'they shall mount up with wings as eagles' (Isa. 40. 31).

(iii) *Treasures laid up*: 'lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven' (Matt. 6. 20).

(iv) *The Spirit springing up*: 'the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life' (John 4. 14; cf. John 7. 38-39).

(v) *Power lifting up*: 'he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength'. (Acts 3. 7).

(vi) *Love building up*: 'knowledge puffs up, but love builds up' (1 Cor. 8. 1).

(vii) *The church caught up*: 'we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord' (1 Thess. 4. 17).

Two very different High Priests.

Hannah 'vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if you will ... give to your hand-maid a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life"' (1 Sam. 1. 11).

'Recognising that conception and childbirth are God's gifts, and humbly confessing herself three times to be His 'hand-maid', [Hannah] vowed that, if God saw fit to 'give' to her a son, she would in turn 'give' him back to the Lord, not only for the stipulated number of years for a Levite—which her son would be (1 Chron. 6. 33-38)—but for 'all the days of his life'.

'And so, if her son's *birth* would make him a *Levite*, her *vow* would make him a *Nazarite* (1 Sam. 1. 11; cf. Num. 6. 5; Judg. 13. 5).

'Ironically, Hannah's silent prayer and vow that her son would spend his entire life separate from all wine and strong drink was construed by *Eli* as evidence that she herself had been drinking too much (1 Sam. 1. 14). And so, having suffered earlier the unkind provocation of Peninnah, she had now to suffer the unjust censure of Eli.

'How different *our all-knowing and sympathetic High Priest*, who never misunderstands and who never discourages His people!'

(*Living in the Promised Land (Precious Seed Publications)*), page 98.)

Four short and crisp prayers.

(i) Peter: '*save* me' (Matt. 14. 30). *Salvation.*

(ii) Jabez: '*keep* me' (1 Chron. 4. 10). *Preservation.*

(iii) David; '*teach* me' (Psa. 27. 11). *Instruction.*

(iv) Isaiah: '*send* me', (Isa. 6. 8). *Consecration.*

Eating and drinking.

On Mount Sinai, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy elders of Israel not only 'saw the God of Israel' (Exod. 24. 10) but they '*did eat and drink*' in His presence (Exod. 24. 11). What a breath-taking privilege!

But, surely, the apostles enjoyed no less a privilege following the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Listen to Peter's declaration to Cornelius: 'Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly; not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who *did eat and drink* with Him after He rose from the dead' (Acts 10. 40-41; cf. Luke 24. 41-43; John 21. 12-13). What a breath-taking privilege!

'A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have ... Have you any food here?' (Luke 24. 39-41).

'Jesus has not returned to the ... existence that is subject to the law of death, but He lives anew in fellowship with God, permanently beyond the reach of death. On the other hand, it is important that the encounters with the risen Lord are not just interior events or mystical experiences—they are real encounters with the living one who is now embodied in a new way and remains embodied. Luke emphasizes this very strongly: *Jesus is not, as the disciples initially feared ... a "spirit"*. He has "flesh and bones" (Luke 24. 37-40).

'What is meant by the apparition of a "spirit" as opposed to the risen Lord, can best be seen in the biblical account of the medium at Endor (1 Sam. 28. 8-15) ... The "spirit" ... is a dead man ... summoned forth, only to return to the realm of the dead.

'Jesus, however, does not come from the realm of the dead, *which He has definitively left behind*: on the contrary, He comes ... as the one who is truly alive, who is Himself the source of life.

'Luke underlines quite dramatically how different the risen Lord is from a mere "spirit" by recounting that Jesus asked the still fearful disciples for something to eat and then ate a piece of grilled fish before their eyes'.

(J. Ratzinger, '*Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week, from the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*', page 180.)

Footnote to 'the medium at Endor (1 Sam. 28. 8-15)'

Saul swore an oath in the name of the living God (1 Sam. 28. 10) while seeking help from one who supposedly consulted the dead, a practice which Saul knew had been declared an abomination by that same living Lord! Saul had now degenerated so far as to swear to the woman in the Lord's name that she would not be punished for transgressing the Lord's law. It is sad that, as far as we know, the last time Saul ever used the name of the Lord was in swearing to a medium.

There is no evidence that the woman had anything to do with the appearance of Samuel; indeed, all the evidence points very much the other way. Presumably, the medium began to make her normal preparations, expecting, as usual, to lapse into some trance-like state, in which state she would normally have come under the power of some spirit (her 'control spirit' as it is often known in occult circles), who would then impersonate the individual called for.

This time, however, the usual occult procedure was cut short abruptly by the sudden – and totally unexpected – appearance of the spirit of the real Samuel.

With the real appearance of Samuel, the woman realised she had got more than she had bargained for. This was no demonic impersonation. If I may say so, she was certainly no 'happy medium'! It seems clear that she was transfixed with terror and screamed out loudly (1 Sam. 28. 12) because she knew immediately that what she saw was something fundamentally different from anything which had come into the range of her previous experience.

Samuel appeared by the power and permission of God Himself; neither the woman nor Saul, neither Satan nor the demonic world, had any hand in it. Samuel actually came, not because the medium, or anyone else, summoned him, but because it pleased God, for His own good reasons, to permit it. I suggest that the Lord stepped in, partly (i) to expose the fraud of all the woman was engaged in, partly (ii) to baffle any attempt by the powers of darkness to take advantage of the opening given to them by Saul's foolish request, and partly (iii) to allow Samuel to speak his final word of truth and doom to Saul (as in 1 Sam. 28. 16-19).

Old and new appetites.

'There is nothing in this wide world, or of it, which can refresh the new man, any more than there is in heaven to satisfy the old'.

(J. N. Darby, *God's Rest, the Saint's Rest*, Collected Writings Volume 16, page 120.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

1.

Charlie was desperate for money. So, he decided to look for odd jobs as a handy man in an upper-class district of the town where he lived.

The first large and luxurious house he came to, a man answered the door and said, 'Well, yes, as it happens, I do have a job I can offer you. How would you like to paint the porch?'

'That sounds just great', Charlie replied, 'but how much will you pay?'

'I'm willing to pay £70 – just for your labour', the man said, 'You'll find all the paint and brushes you will need in the garage'.

Having agreed the deal, the man went back into his house and told his wife what was happening.

'Only £70?' she responded. 'Did he realise that the porch goes all the way around the house?'

'Well, if he didn't, he'll soon find out', her tight-fisted husband replied with a grin.

It was little more than an hour later when Charlie knocked on the front door.

'I'm finished, guv', he announced to the surprised homeowner.

'That's nothing short of amazing', the man exclaimed, 'but are you sure you painted the whole porch?'

'Certainly', Charlie replied. 'Indeed, as I had some paint left, I put on two coats'.

The man happily reached into his wallet to pay Charlie the £70.

'Oh, by the way, guv', Charlie said, '*It's not a Porsche... it's a Ferrari*'.

And, speaking of cars ...

2.

A lady went to an auto-parts store and asked for 'a seven-ten cap'. The Customer Service staff looked at each other and then one of the assistants asked the lady, 'What is a seven-ten cap?'

'Oh, dear', she said, 'I thought you would know. It's normally on top of the engine. Somehow mine got lost and I need a new one'.

'Tell me', the assistant asked, 'exactly what make of a car do you have?'

'My car is a Ford Fiesta', she replied.

'Well', the assistant continued, 'and how big is the missing seven-ten cap?'

The lady made a circle with her hands on the counter about three-and-a-half inches in diameter.

Still mystified, the assistant posed one more question: 'Do you know what it is supposed to do?'

'I don't', the lady responded. 'All I know is that it has always been there'.

At this point, the manager of the store came over.

He handed the lady a notepad and asked her to draw a picture of the article. The customer drew a circle about three-and-a-half inches in diameter and carefully wrote '710' in the centre.

Smiling, the manager, turned the drawing upside down, walked over to one of the shelves and *came back with an OIL cap!*