

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 17 April 2023.

(i) Scripture.

He began to speak to them in parables:

A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country.

When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.

And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again, he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed.

He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally, he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son'.

But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours'. And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

Have you not read this Scripture, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'?

Mark 12. 1-11 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Lifted up' in the Gospel according to John.

'Three times, as recorded in this Gospel, the Lord uses the term "lifted up":

- (i) at the beginning of His public career, when speaking to Nicodemus (John 3. 14);
- (ii) about halfway through it, when addressing the Jews who opposed Him (John 8. 28); and
- (iii) as the end was drawing near, when addressing the multitude for the last time (John 12. 32).

'Does not this itself reveal how continually the Cross occupied His mind?'

(W. E. Vine, *'The Leading Themes of the Gospel of John'*, page 110.)

'The God for me'.

'I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross ... In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?

'I have entered many Buddhist temples and stood respectfully before the statue of Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time after a while I have had to turn away.

'And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us'.

(John Stott, *'The Cross of Christ'*, pages 326-327.)

'Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Gal. 6. 14).

'On a hill overlooking the harbour of Macao, Portuguese settlers built a massive cathedral. But over time it fell in ruins, except for one wall. On the top of that high, jutting wall, challenging the elements down through the years, was a huge bronze cross.

'It is said that when Sir John Bowring saw it, he was moved to write these words: "In the cross of Christ I glory, Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time" ...

'Kingdoms and empires come and go, but the cross and all it stands for will always remain. "tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time".'

(Billy Graham, *'Hope for Each Day'*, page 106.)

Christ's three comings.

- (i) 'Lo, I come' (Heb. 10. 7) ... from heaven to earth.
- (ii) 'I come to Thee' (John 17. 11) ... from earth to heaven.
- (iii) 'I come quickly' (Rev. 22. 7, 12, 20) ... from heaven to earth.

'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).

'An old coloured woman who was an earnest Christian, lay dying. Someone asked her why God would save an old sinner like her.

'She answered, "God is g'win to p'int the angels to me and tell 'em to see what the grace of God can do".

(D. L. Moody, 'Notes from My Bible', page 168.)

Balaam's inconsistency.

The word of Balaam to Balak is, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!' (Num. 23. 10). But the word of the apostle Peter is, 'Balaam the son of Beor ... loved the wages of unrighteousness' (2 Pet. 2. 15).

'Jericho was "straitly shut up" because of the children of Israel' (Josh. 6. 1).

'The sentence actually repeats the words—"shut up" and "shut up". It was double barred and bolted. But God had no intention of using the gates; that's what ordinary folk do. He would simply remove the walls'.

(J. B. Nicholson Jr, 'Warning! God Is Coming Through', Taste and See, Uplook Ministries, 4 April 2023.)

'In all the scriptures the things concerning Himself' (Luke 24. 27).

'Ask yourself, "What have I seen in the Bible lately?" ... Next, ask yourself, "What have I seen of Christ lately?"

'What about Him has emblazoned your heart and satisfied your soul? Which of His words has captivated your attention? Which of His excellencies has harpooned your affections? What about His cross has humbled you. What of His resurrection has sustained you. What of His return fixes your eyes upon the skies, waiting?'

(Greg Morse, 'Losing Christ in Christianity'; accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/losing-christ-in-christianity>.)

'The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus' (Phil. 3. 8).

'The knowledge of Christ is profound and large. All other sciences are but shadows. This is a boundless, bottomless ocean; no creature has a line long enough to fathom the depth of it ...

'It is the studying of Christ, as in the planting of a new discovered country. At first, men sit down by the seaside, upon the skirts and borders of the land; and there they dwell, but by degrees they search farther and farther into the heart of the country.

'Ah, the best of us are yet but upon the borders of this vast continent!'

(John Flavel, 'The Fountain of Life', The Whole Works of John Flavel, Volume 1, page 36).

'Faith in Christ Jesus' (Acts 24. 24; Col. 1. 4; 2 Tim. 3. 15).

'We must not be occupied about our faith, but about the object. Not with the laws of optics, nor with the power or construction of the eye must we be occupied. If we would enjoy a beautiful landscape; we must look at it and feast upon It'.

(James Hudson Taylor, 'Hudson Taylor's Choice Sayings', China Inland Mission, page 5.)

'A man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ' (Gal. 2. 16).

'Many people will wax on and on about faith and belief and say, "I'm a person of faith" or "You've got to have faith". But faith by itself doesn't mean anything. It is the object of faith that saves us.

'It is not being a person who has strong beliefs, who is sincere, or who has a mystical belief in spiritual things that saves us. It is faith in Jesus Christ. He is the object ...

'Faith is only an instrument ... Faith is what joins us to Christ, and then He saves us. It is the object that matters'.

(Kevin DeYoung, 'Christ, Redemption, Grace' in The New City Catechism, page 131.)

'Not as though I had already attained' (Phil. 3. 12).

'This is the statement of a great Christian who never permitted himself to be satisfied with his spiritual attainments. Obviously, Paul was satisfied with Jesus Christ (Phil. 3. 10), but he was not satisfied with his Christian life.

'A sanctified dissatisfaction is the first essential to progress in the Christian race'.
(Warren Wiersbe, 'The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament', page 647).

Colossians 1. 15-29.

'In Christ, as elements of His glory:

(i) two headships, one in creation, the other in resurrection (verses 15-18);

(ii) two reconciliations, that of the creation, and that of the saints forming the church (verses 19-22);
and

(iii) two ministries proceeding from Him, the gospel preached to all creation, and the ministry of the church (verses 23-29) ...

"To fulfil the word of God" (verse 25). The doctrine of the church [verses 26-27] completes the word of God, the Scriptures. What was given afterwards did not add new truths to the revelation of God.

'The Apocalypse, for instance, gives many new details on prophecy; it casts much light on the prophets of the Old Testament, etc., but they are not at all new truths'.

(J. N. Darby, 'Notes on the Epistle to the Colossians', Collected Writings, Volume 27, pages 250, 252.)

'He cares for you' (1 Pet. 5. 7).

'The old world looked upon Paradise as a place without care.

'It measured the majesty of the gods by their exemption from the cares of humanity. They dwelt on the top of Olympus, and rejoiced all the day in a sunshine whose cloudlessness was its carelessness—its absence of interest in the problems of human want, its recklessness of the fate of those who pine and suffer and die.

'But Christ opened the door of a new Paradise and let man see in. He gave to the human eye a totally different vision of the nature of Divine majesty. He showed that the majesty of God differed from the majesty of earthly kings not in having less, but in having more care ... the government of the King of kings was supremely great because it could lift the burdens of all'.

(George Matheson, 'Moments on the Mount', pages 259-260.)

'He is faithful ... to forgive' (1 John 1. 9); 'He is faithful that promised' (Heb. 10. 23).

'It is the wonderful mercy of God both to forgive us our debts to Him in our sins, and to make Himself a debtor to us in His promises ...

'He neither calleth for those debts which He hath once forgiven, nor withdraws those favours and that heaven which He hath promised: but, as He is a merciful creditor to forgive, so He is a true debtor to pay whatsoever He hath undertaken'.

(Joseph Hall, 'Breathings of a Devout Soul', page 112.)

Five Aramaic words or expressions used by the Lord Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of Mark.

(i) 'James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder"' (Mark 3. 17)

(ii) 'Taking her by the hand He said to her, "Talitha cumi", which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise"' (Mark 5. 41).

(iii) 'Looking up to heaven, He sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha", that is, "Be opened"' (Mark 7. 34).

(iv) 'He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you"' (Mark 14. 36).

(v) 'At the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?", which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"' (Mark 15. 34).

Christ: the 'Son' and the 'Stone' (Mark 12. 6-11).

'Using a play on words, Jesus [speaking in Aramaic] here identifies Himself as both the Son (*ben*) and the Stone (*'eben*) of His story about the drama of His death and divine vindication ...

'The detailed accounts of the Lord's Passion are descriptions of His rejection by the builders, while the Gospel stories of the risen Jesus are the narratives of "the Lord's doing" that is so "marvellous in our eyes"'.
(P. H. Reardon, 'Christ in the Psalms', page 236)

(iii) Go on, smile.

1. A preacher was speaking on the relationship between fact and faith. To illustrate the difference, he said, "That you are sitting before me in this church—is fact. That I am standing here, speaking from this pulpit—is fact. *That anyone is listening to me—is faith* on my part!"

2. Mrs Wilkins was saying good-bye to her son, Jack, who was returning to boarding school after the spring holidays. She reminded him to write often.

Another lady was standing nearby and heard Mrs Wilkins' appeal. After Jack had left, she gave this advice to Mrs Wilkins: 'The surest way to get your son to write home is to send him a letter saying, 'Here's fifty pounds, spend it however you like'.

Puzzled, Mrs Wilkins asked, 'But however will that make my Jack write home?'

'Simple', the lady replied, '*you "forget" to enclose the fifty pounds!*'