

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 19 February 2024

(i) Scripture.

Then Moses said to the Lord, "See, you say to me, 'Bring up this people'. But you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in my sight'. Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in your sight, show me now your way ...".

And He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest".

Then he said to Him, "If your presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that your people and I have found grace in your sight, except you go with us? So, we shall be separate, your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth".

So, the Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in my sight, and I know you by name".

And he said, "Please, show me your glory".

Then He said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you" ... But He said, "You cannot see my face; for no man shall see me, and live".

And the Lord said, "Here is a place by me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while my glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with my hand while I pass by".

Exodus 33. 12-22 (*The New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you' (John 14. 27).

"Worry", says Vance Havner, *"is like sitting in a rocking chair. It will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere"*. Worry and anxiety have hounded the human race since the beginning of time, and modern man with all his innovations has not found the cure for the plague of worry.

'What is the answer? Imagine in your mind a ferocious ocean storm beating against a rocky shore. The lightning flashes, the thunder roars, the waves lash the rocks. But then imagine that you see a crevice in the rocky cliff—and inside is a little bird, its head serenely tucked under its wing, fast asleep. It knows the rock will protect it, and thus it sleeps in peace.

'God promised Moses, "I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with my hand" (Exod. 33. 22). That is God's promise to us. Christ is our Rock, and we are secure in His hands forever. *The storm rages, but our hearts are at rest*'.

(Billy Graham, *'Hope for Each Day'*, the meditation for 30 June.)

'Not of the world' (John 17. 14).

'I often think of those words, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world". Beloved brethren, do we ever consider in what way He was not of the world?

'Scripture tells us that all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2. 16). That is what we are naturally; we are made up of these three defiling things, none of which are of the Father, but of the world.

'But look at Him, and what do we see? Divine **love** instead of the *lust of the flesh*, divine **light** instead of the *lust of the eyes*, and divine **lowliness** instead of the *pride of life*. He was not of the world. There was not a single feature in common between Christ and the world'.

(C. A. Coates, *'The Paths of Life and Other Addresses'*, page 137.)

Three blessings (Eph. 1 and 2).

'(i) *Saved* by grace (Eph. 2. 8).

'(ii) *Sealed* with the Spirit (Eph. 1. 13).

'(iii) *Seated* with Christ (Eph. 2. 6)'.

(T. Baird, quoted by Henry Pickering, *'One Thousand Subjects for Speakers and Students'*, page 73.)

'Preach the word' (2 Tim. 4. 2).

'Dr Carey, the pioneer missionary in India, before he left this country, was a shoemaker, rather, as he himself put it, a cobbler, but he used to go about from village to village preaching ...

'One day a friend came to him and said, "Mr Carey ... by your going about preaching as you do, you are neglecting your business. If you only attended to your business more, you would be all right, and would soon get on and prosper, but as it is, you are simply neglecting your business".

"Neglecting my business!" said Carey, looking at him steadily. "My business is to extend the kingdom of God. I only cobble shoes to pay expenses meanwhile".

(F. E. Marsh, '*Illustrated Bible Studies*', pages 29-30).

'Guard yourselves from every kind of greed' (Luke 12. 15 {Good News Bible}).

'Some years ago, my wife, Kathy, noticed I was doing a series of monthly morning breakfasts on the seven deadly sins. The seven deadly sins include lust, pride, envy, anger, and so forth. And, of course, one of the seven deadly sins is greed.

'Kathy asked, "Are they advertising these things?" I said, "Yes, they're advertising".

'She said, "So they'll know the month you're speaking on greed?" I said, "Right".

'She said, "Watch, the attendance is going to drop. They're not going to come out to hear about greed".

'And she was right. It was the least attended of all of them ... Everybody was just so sure it wasn't true of them'.

(Timothy Keller, '*Treasure versus Money*', a sermon preached on 2 May 2, 1999 ... accessed at <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/faith/discipleship/watch-out-you-might-be-greedy>.)

Twelve 'glorious' things (six in each Testament).

(i) The 'glorious name' (1 Chron. 29. 13; Neh. 9. 5; Psa. 72. 19; Isa. 63. 14).

(ii) The 'glorious majesty of His kingdom' (Psa. 145. 12).

(iii) The 'glorious voice' (Isa. 30. 30).

(iv) The 'glorious Lord' (Isa. 33. 21).

(v) The 'glorious arm' (Isa. 63. 12).

(vi) The 'glorious holy mountain' (Dan 11. 45).

(vii) The 'glorious liberty of the children of God' (Rom. 8. 21).

(viii) The 'glorious gospel of Christ' (2 Cor. 4. 4; cf. 1 Tim. 1. 11).

(ix) The 'glorious church' (Eph. 5. 27).

(x) The 'glorious body' (Phil. 3. 21).

(xi) The 'glorious power' (Col. 1. 11).

(xii) The 'glorious appearing' (Tit. 2. 13).

Matthew Henry's attitude to earthly possessions.

'As I came home I was robbed. The thieves took from me about ten or eleven shillings. My remarks upon it were:

1. What reason have I to be thankful to God, who have travelled so much, and yet was never robbed before.
2. What a deal of evil the love of money is the root of, that four men would venture their lives and souls, for about half a crown a piece.
3. See the power of Satan in the children of disobedience.
4. See the vanity of worldly wealth; how soon we may be stripped of it. How loose, therefore, we should sit to it'.

(Matthew Henry, his diary entry dated early March 1713, quoted in '*Memoirs of the Life, Character, and Writings of the Rev. Matthew Henry*' by J. B. Williams, 1830, page 241.)

[I have seen the quotation in the form, "Let me be thankful first because I was never robbed before; second, although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed", but I have failed to trace this attractive version to any reliable source.]

'Jesus Christ and Him crucified' (1 Cor. 2. 2).

'David Brainard, the famous missionary to the American Indians, proclaimed this truth throughout his ministry.

'He said, "I never got away from Jesus and Him crucified in my preaching. I found that once these people were gripped by the great evangelical meaning of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, I did not have to give them many instructions about changing their behaviour".

(‘Our Daily Bread’, April 1977, quoted in J. Hampton Keathley III, ‘The Letter to Titus’, the introductory comment on Tit. 2. 11-15.)

The sighs and tears of the Lord Jesus.

‘His heart of love must have suffered greatly from the unbelief of unhappy man, and from His rejection by the people.

‘We read of His sighing in opening the deaf ears and loosing the tied tongue (Mark 7. 34); and on the Pharisees asking a sign (Mark 8. 12), of His sighing deeply in spirit. So, indeed, in John 11 at the tomb of Lazarus, He wept and groaned within Himself at seeing the power of death over the spirits of men, and their incapacity to deliver themselves; and as He wept also over Jerusalem, when He saw the beloved city just going to reject Him in the day of its visitation.

‘All this was the suffering of perfect love, moving through a scene of ruin, in which self-will and heartlessness shut every avenue against this love which was so earnestly working in its midst’.

(J. N. Darby, ‘The Sufferings of Christ’, Collected Writings, Volume 7, page 168.)

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? (Song of Songs 8. 5)

‘The Song of Solomon first traces the commencement and growth of the love between the Shulamite maiden and himself, culminating in their happy and glorious marriage. Sadly, the Song then describes a period of indifference on her part and of withdrawal on his part. But all that is now past. And, with renewed intimacy, the couple seemingly return to the place where their relationship had begun, passing near the very apple tree which had borne its silent witness to their ‘first love’ ... the Shulamite is described ... most beautifully, as “leaning upon her beloved”.

‘How precious it is that we, in all our weakness, and, in spite of our past waning affection, can lean on our “Beloved”, on One immeasurably “greater than Solomon” (Matt. 12. 42). And we rest in the knowledge that, leaning on Him (in all His wisdom, power, grace and faithfulness), even though we may stumble, He will not let us fall, and, even though we may grow faint and weary, He will uphold our tottering steps.

‘We lean on One who affords us far greater help and support than that which (i) Jacob ever found in leaning on “the top of his staff” (Heb. 11. 21), (ii) the hypocrite ever found in leaning “upon his house” (Job 8. 15) or (iii) the Assyrian wrongly assumed Hezekiah hoped to obtain by leaning on Egypt and its king (2 Kings 18. 21).

‘It is not for us to “lean” on our “own understanding” (Prov. 3. 6), but rather to say with Horatius Bonar:

“I have no help but Thine; nor do I need
Another arm save Thine to lean upon;
It is enough, my Lord, enough indeed”.

‘Amen, Lord!’

(‘Day by Day: Bible Questions’, Precious Seed Publications, page 129.)

‘He healed them ... they did all eat, and were filled’ (Matt. 15. 29-39).

‘See what work sin has made; what various diseases human bodies are subject to. Here were such diseases as fancy could neither guess the cause nor the cure of, yet these were subject to the command of Christ.

‘The spiritual cures that Christ works are wonderful. When blind souls are made to see by faith, the dumb to speak in prayer, the maimed and the lame to walk in holy obedience, it is to be wondered at.

‘His power was also shown to the multitude, in the plentiful provision He made for them: the manner is much the same as before. All did eat, and were filled.

‘Those whom Christ feeds, He fills. With Christ, there is bread enough, and to spare; supplies of grace for more than seek it, and for those that seek for more.

‘Christ sent away the people. Though He had fed them twice, they must not look for miracles to find their daily bread. Let them go home to their callings and their own tables’.

(Matthew Henry, ‘Matthew Henry Daily Readings: edited by R. J. Pederson’, meditation for 16 March.)

‘Meditate on these things’ (1 Tim. 4. 15).

‘When a man hears the word of God in public or in private but does not continue to meditate on it afterwards, it is because it has made no impression on him’.

(William Bridge, ‘The Sweetness of Divine Meditation’, page 62).

‘Come before His presence with singing’ (Psa. 100. 2).

‘I fear that too often in our services, singing becomes routine. We hold the hymnal and sing the songs that we know so well, but our minds and hearts are a million miles away. Think about and rejoice in the words you sing’.

(iii) Go on, smile.

Today, I reproduce two examples of President Ronald Reagan's sense of humour:

1. 'This is the story of (an estate agent) who was out driving on a back road on his way to look at some property and suddenly noticed down beside him was a chicken keeping pace with him, and he was doing sixty miles an hour. Suddenly the chicken spurted out ahead of him. It looked to him as if the chicken had three legs. And then it turned and went into a barnyard.

'The man turned down the lane and drove into the barnyard. There was a farmer there and he asked him, "Did you see a chicken go by here?" And the farmer says "Yep". "Did it have three legs?" "Yep: I raise them that way. I breed them".

'Then the (estate agent) asks, "How come?" "Well, I just love the drumstick and Maw always liked the drumstick and now Junior's come along and he likes it too and we just got tired of fighting over it. So, I've been breeding three-legged chickens".

'The (estate agent) then asks, "Well, how do they taste?"

'And the farmer replies, "I don't know. *I haven't been able to catch one yet*".

2. 'There were three dogs: an American dog, a Polish dog and a Russian dog. They were having a visit and the American dog was telling how things were in his country.

'The American dog said, "You know, you bark and bark long enough and somebody comes along and gives you some meat".

'The Polish dog asked, "What's meat?"

'After a pause, the Russian dog asked, "What's bark?"

[On a more serious note, on 29 May 1988, President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev opened their historic summit in Moscow.

I have enjoyed the following account:

'In the course of their meeting, President Reagan recounted to Gorbachev a moving story he had told in his Prayer Breakfast speech the previous February. He "said he had a letter from the widow of a young World War II soldier. He was lying in a shell hole at midnight, awaiting an order to attack. He had never been a believer, because he had been told God did not exist".

'Because we only have notes summarizing what President Reagan told Gorbachev, we don't know how much detail he shared with the Communist Party General Secretary about why the soldier changed his mind. But when he told the story at the Prayer Breakfast, he quoted the young soldier's letter directly, which made things crystal clear: "I've never contemplated your creation", wrote the soldier, "and yet tonight, gazing up out of my shell hole, I marvelled at the shimmering stars above me and suddenly knew the cruelty of the lie [of atheism]".

'President Reagan told Mr Gorbachev that the soldier "voiced a prayer hoping that, if he died in battle, God would accept him". He saved the punchline for last: The soldier who wrote the letter was not an American; he was Russian.

'Rather than conclude with inoffensive pleasantries, the President decided to tell his favourite story about a gourmet dinner! But this time he told the story with a slight, yet important, twist.

'On all the other occasions that he publicly shared the story, he always framed it as focusing on nameless atheists. Yet meeting privately with the world's most powerful Communist, President Reagan revealed that there was one particular atheist he wanted to reach—his son, Ron.

'According to the notetaker, the President "concluded that there was one thing he had long yearned to do for his atheist son. He wanted to serve his son the perfect gourmet dinner, to have him enjoy the meal, and then to ask him if he believed there was a cook". He then added that "he wondered how his son would answer".

'We don't know whether President Reagan ever posed the scenario to his son. If he did, Ron presumably rejected it. But Ronald Reagan's heartfelt thought experiment had made an impact on another atheist.

'According to the notetaker, "As the meeting ended, Gorbachev said that the only answer possible was 'yes'".

(Source: <https://evolutionnews.org/2024/01/ronald-reagans-deeply-personal-argument-for-intelligent-design/>.)]