

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 13 March 2023.

(i) Scripture

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.

One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts.

I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of Thy terrible acts: and I will declare Thy greatness ...

The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works.

All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord; and Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom.

Psalm 145. 3-12 (*King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Bless the Lord, all His works in all places of His dominion' (Psa. 103. 22).

1. God rules.

The experiences of three Old Testament prophets combine to demonstrate that God rules over the whole animal kingdom:

(i) *Elijah* can speak for His dominion over *the birds of the air*, 1 Kings 17. 4.

(ii) *Daniel* can speak for His dominion over *the beasts of the earth*, Dan. 6. 22.

(iii) *Jonah* can speak for His dominion over *the fish of the sea*, Jonah 1. 17.

2. God directs:

(i) *the arrow in its flight*. We read that Ahab, the king of Israel, 'disguised himself and went into battle ... now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armour ... and the king ... died at evening', 1 Kings 22. 30-35;

(ii) *the sling-stone on its way*. We read that 'David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth', 1 Sam. 17. 49;

(iii) *the millstone in its fall*. We read that 'Abimelech came as far as the tower and fought against it; and he drew near the door of the tower to burn it with fire. But a certain woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull', Judg. 9. 52-53;

(iv) *the lightning where it strikes*. We read that God 'covers His hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark', Job 36. 32 ESV; and

(v) *the wind where it blows*. We read that 'Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night ... so the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground' Exod. 14. 21—very much a case of 'stormy wind fulfilling His command', Psa. 148. 8.

Divine persons speaking 'on account of' others.

(i) *The Son spoke to the Father for the benefit of others*: 'Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me"' (John 11. 41-42).

(ii) *The Father spoke to the Son for the benefit of others*: 'Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again". The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, "An angel spoke to Him". Jesus answered and said, "This voice came not on my account but on your account"' (John 12. 28-30).

'There talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory ... But Peter and they that were with Him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw His glory' (Luke 9. 30-32).

'We are told that they were "*with Him*", and then that they "*appeared in glory*". They share in the same glory as that in which He was manifested.

'And so as to us: "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also *appear with Him in glory*" [Col. 3. 4] ...

'When you possess Him in your soul, it gives you the consciousness that you have the very same happiness that there will be in heaven. You may know Christ better, and love Him better, when you get there ... but it is not another God, another Christ, another Holy Ghost, that you will have.

'All the things that will make me blessed in heaven I have now ... If you want to know what makes a Christian happy in life and death, it is that the Christ he has got now is the Christ that he will have in heaven'.

(J. N. Darby, 'Collected Writings', Volume 16, pages 280 and 398.)

'The governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so" (Matt. 27. 11).

'Jesus' answer is very revealing. It is the answer to a question which does not admit of an unconditional yes or no. "You say so". The implication is that the man who gives it will not deny it, but that he himself might have expressed the matter differently, or might have given his own interpretation of its meaning.

'As A. H. McNeile puts it, it is as if Jesus said that it was verbally correct to call Him a king, but that at the same time neither Pilate nor the Jews had even begun to understand what that kingship meant'.

(William Barclay, 'Jesus as They Saw Him', page 241. The 'McNeile' reference is to Alan H. McNeile, 'The Gospel according to St. Matthew', page 409.)

'He is risen' (Mark 16. 6).

1. 'The Easter message tells us that our enemies, sin, the curse, and death, are beaten. Ultimately, they can no longer start mischief. They still behave as though the game were not decided, the battle not fought; we must still reckon with them, but fundamentally we must cease to fear them anymore.

'If you have heard the Easter message, you can no longer run around with a tragic face and lead the humourless existence of a man who has no hope. One thing still holds, and only this one thing is really serious, that Jesus is the Victor'.

(Karl Barth, 'Dogmatics in Outline', page 123.)

2. 'On the Easter just before he died, William E. Sangster painfully printed a short note to his daughter. A deeply spiritual Methodist, he had been spearheading a renewal movement in the British Isles after World War II. Then his ministry, except for prayer, was ended by a disease which progressively paralyzed his body, even his vocal cords. But the last Resurrection Sunday he spent on earth, still able to move his fingers, he wrote: "How terrible to wake up on Easter and have no voice to shout, 'He is risen!' Far worse, to have a voice and not want to shout".

(J. S. Hewett, 'Illustrations Unlimited', Tyndale House Publishers, page 167.)

'The last enemy to be destroyed is death' (1 Cor. 15. 26).

'All Christians will be raised from the dead (or changed if they are alive at Christ's coming), which means that the victory of sin and death is only temporary. God will defeat the last enemy.

'While **graveyards** may remind one of the brevity of life, the **resurrection** ensures the brevity of death'.

(David E. Garland, 'First Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament', page 681.)

'Then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to God the Father; when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power' (1 Cor. 15. 24).

'This delegated royalty must some time be delivered up to the Father, from whom it was received; for it is a power received for particular ends and purposes ... and when these ends shall be obtained, there is no need that the power and authority should be continued'.

(Matthew Henry, 'Commentary on the whole Bible', Volume II, page 1063).

'Then comes the end' ... that is Plan A; the Lord has **no Plan B**.

The journey of life.

'Life is a journey, a journey that is daily carrying us towards its end. We may perhaps be enjoying the journey and finding it full of pleasure and happiness; or we may not be enjoying it but rather finding it full of pain and sorrow. But the most important thing of the journey is where the journey will end'.

(David Gooding, 'Can We Be Sure of Heaven?', Myrtlefield Sermons, page 4.)

Life.

'We can decide to endure life and make it a burden, escape life as though we were running from a battle, or enjoy life because we know God is in control'.

(Warren W. Wiersbe, 'Be Hopeful: 1 Peter', page 81.)

A school, not a home.

This present world does not make a very good home but it makes a very good school.

'What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand' (John 13. 7)

Not 'till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful
In the Weaver's skilful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.

(Author Unknown – attributed to various.)

'Even the best' and 'even the worst'.

(i) **The Law condemns even the best of men**: 'by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight' (Rom. 3. 20).

(ii) **Grace saves even the worst of men**: 'the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant ... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief ('am the first', 'am the foremost')' (1 Tim. 1. 14-15).

'Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling' (2 Tim. 1. 9).

'You are called not just to a life but to a holy life ... Yes, you are also called to serve, to "do", but that is secondary. "Who" comes before "do". Your calling is more about who you are becoming than what you are doing. You are called not only to serve Jesus but also to become more and more like Him'.

(Craig Groeschel, 'The Power to Change', page 34.)

'Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account' (Matt. 5. 11).

'The profitable thing is, not suffering those evils, but bearing them with equanimity and cheerfulness for the sake of Christ'.

(Augustine, 'Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount', The Fathers of the Church, Volume II, page 31.)

Philadelphia: 'You have a little strength ... a pillar in the temple of my God' (Rev. 3. 8, 12).

'In the porch of Solomon's temple there stood two mighty pillars (1 Kings 7. 21), which were called Jachin (i.e., "Established") and Boaz (i.e., "Strength"), and there is a patent allusion to these in the promise to the Philadelphian overcomer. The church had little strength, but the overcomer was to be established in strength as a pillar in the temple of God'.

(F. A. Tatford, 'The Final Encounter', page 205.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Elderly couples.

1. Travelling.

An elderly English couple, Gilbert and Pam, had never flown before but decided to visit their children in New York so they could see their grandchildren for the first time.

Their night flight was about halfway out over the Atlantic when their pilot's voice came over the intercom: 'This is your captain speaking. Ladies and gentlemen, I need to tell you that one of our three engines has failed. I assure you that there is no cause for alarm. This plane is entirely airworthy flying on two engines. But I regret to say we will be one hour late in arriving in New York'.

Half an hour later, with the desperate calm that is reserved for emergencies, the voice spoke again: 'This is your captain speaking. Ladies and gentlemen, I regret to inform that we have lost the second of our engines. There is no need for panic. We expect to make a safe landing at JFK Airport. We shall, however, now be two hours late in arriving'.

At this, Pam leant across to Gilbert and, with a hint of irritation in her voice, said, 'One engine goes and we're told we'll be one hour late ... two engines go and we're told we'll be two hours late ... darling, *if that third engine goes, we'll be up here all night*'.

2. Celebrating.

George and Winifred Brown were celebrating their golden anniversary at a party thrown for them by their family. The husband was very moved by the occasion and wanted to tell his wife just how much she meant to him. Winifred was very hard of hearing, however, and often misunderstood what others said.

With many family members and friends gathered around, George addressed her loudly, 'Winnie, my dear, I want everyone to know that after fifty years I've found you tried and true!'

Everyone smiled—except Winifred, who simply said, 'Eh?'

George repeated much louder, 'I WANT TO TELL YOU THAT AFTER FIFTY YEARS I'VE FOUND YOU TRIED AND TRUE!'

Winifred harrumphed and shot back, 'Well, let me tell you something, George Brown—*after fifty years I'm tired of you, too!*'