

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 28 April 2025

(i) Scripture.

Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil.

And in those days, He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread'. But Jesus answered him, saying, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God"'.

Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'All this authority I will give you, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if you will worship before me, all will be yours'. And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Get behind me, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve"'.

Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you" and "In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone"'. And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It has been said, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God"'.

Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

Luke 4. 1-13 (*New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

Three reflections on Easter.

1. 'He was buried; and ... raised the third day' (1 Cor. 15. 4).

'From a human standpoint, we think of the miraculous day as Sunday, the day the man Jesus is risen from the dead. I wonder if, from Heaven's standpoint, the great miracle isn't on Saturday ... The miracle of Sunday is that a dead man lives. The miracle of Saturday is that the eternal Son of God lies dead'.

(J. Ortberg, *Who Is This Man?*, 2012, page 185.)

2. 'Men appointed His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich man in His death' (Isa. 53. 9).

'Good Friday ended the way God said: with the Messiah assigned to die like the wicked, but mysteriously ending up in the tomb of a rich man'.

(R. Brunansky, 'The Significance of Jesus' Burial', accessed at <https://thecripplegate.com/the-significance-of-jesus-burial/>)

3. 'Joseph of Arimathea ... went in boldly to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus' (Mark 15. 43).

'Up until Joseph of Arimathea brought his request to Pilate, the disciples had made no burial plans. And how could they? They were still reeling, haunted by all they'd witnessed, scarcely able to believe it really happened ... No one wants to be the undertaker for a crucified Christ ...

'Emerging from the shadows of his secret discipleship, Joseph risked the wrath of his peers, boldly asking Pilate if he could have Jesus' body ... The dead Jesus was laid to rest in the space intended for a dead Joseph.

'Joseph had no expectation for this body. He didn't claim it for what it could do for him. His faith was not yet so big as to believe there could be something more, something beyond a funeral. But still—he wanted to honour this death, to connect himself to it'.

(J. D. Peabody, 'What Do You Do With a Dead Jesus?', accessed at ...

<https://www.plough.com/en/topics/culture/holidays/easter-readings/what-do-you-do-with-a-dead-jesus.>)

'They spat in His face' (Matt. 26. 67).

Men spat (Matt. 26. 67; 27. 30; cf. Luke 18. 32) on Him, whose own spittle had previously played a part in the healing of the deaf and the blind (Mark 7. 33; 8. 23; John 9. 6, 11).

'That the world may know that I love the Father ... even so I do' (John 14. 31).

'The underlying force governing the life of Christ and giving it unity was His love.

'His life, death and resurrection are the history of the loving obedience with which He accepted the abasement of the redemptive incarnation and made His way back to the Father along the path

appointed by the divine will. His death was (i) the lowest point in His obedient self-abasement and (ii) the culminating expression of His love'.

(C. Davis, the 'Introduction' to F. X. Durrwell, *'The Resurrection'*, 1960, pages xviii-xix.)

'Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth' (Col. 3. 2).

'Hope is one of the theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not, as some modern people think, a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do.

'It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven.

'It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven, and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth, and you will get neither'.

(C. S. Lewis, *'Mere Christianity'*, page 118.)

'Things Which Abide.

1. The Abiding Christ. 'Christ abideth for ever' (John 12. 34).
2. The Abiding Spirit. 'Comforter, that He may abide with you' (John 14. 16).
3. The Abiding Word. 'The Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever' (1 Pet. 1. 23).
4. The Abiding Fruit. 'Your fruit should abide' (John 15. 16, R.V.).
5. The Abiding Work. 'If any man's work abide which he hath built upon, he shall receive a reward' (1 Cor. 3. 14).
6. The Abiding Graces. 'Now abideth faith, hope, and love' (1 Cor. 13. 13, R.V.).
7. The Abiding Saints. 'He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever' (1 John 2. 17)'.
(F. E. Marsh, *'One Thousand New Bible Readings'*, page 400, number 861.)

'One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all' (Eph. 4. 6).

'The transcendent One is also the immanent One ... Oh, that the Lord may grip our hearts with these two glorious realities: my God is preeminent, "above all", but He is also present, "in you all".

(J. B. Nicholson Jr, *'A Friend in High Places'*, Taste and See, Uplook Ministries, 17 April 2025.)

'Now for a little while, if need be, you are in heaviness' (1 Pet. 1. 6).

'Do not make yourselves uneasy: the One who holds the reins of the need-be is God. He does not take pleasure in afflicting'.

(J. N. Darby, *'The Path and Character of the Christian'*, Collected Writings, Volume 16, page 187.)

Propitiation.

1. 'Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation ... to declare His righteousness' (Rom. 3. 24-25).

'The death of His Son provided by God as the propitiation not only revealed His love (1 John 4. 9-10) but also demonstrated His righteousness (Rom. 3. 25) ...

'The purpose of Christ being the propitiation was to achieve a divine forgiveness which is worthy of God—consonant with His righteousness, not by condoning evil or implying that it is of little consequence, but by the fact that God's Son had to bear it, showing at the same time the fullness of God's hatred of it and its complete forgiveness'.

(H. Moore, *'The Concept of Propitiation'*, in *'Semănătorul'*, Volume 4, Number 2, page 78.)

2. 'He is the propitiation ... for the whole world' (1 John 2. 2).

'The actual remission takes place only in the case of those who avail themselves of the propitiation ... There is no Scripture to show that Christ bore away every man's sins on the cross.

'John the Baptist's statement, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world", means that sin was so dealt with there, that now all who accept God's terms may be freed from guilt, and that hereafter in the new heavens and new earth there will be no trace of sin. Christ was manifested "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9. 26).

'We must ... distinguish between sin and sins ... The provision is universal, the application is made good only in the case of those who receive Christ by faith, on the ground of His finished work on the cross'.

(W. E. Vine, *'The First and the Last'*, pages 74-75.)

Standing 'with' Paul.

'Luke alone is *with me* ... No man stood with me ... but the Lord stood *with me*' (2 Tim. 4. 11, 16-17): only the Great Physician and 'the beloved physician' (Col. 4. 14) stuck by Paul.

Eight misunderstood sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John:

(i) 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up' (John 2. 19-21).

(ii) 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3. 3-8).

(iii) 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water' (John 4. 10-11).

(iv) 'Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst again'. (John 4. 13-15).

(v) 'I have food to eat that you know nothing about' (John 4. 31-34).

(vi) 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh' (John 6. 51-53).

(vii) 'Where I am going, you cannot come' (John 7. 34-36; 8. 21-22, 51-53).

(viii) 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him' (John 11. 11-14).

'There were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? ... And Jesus said, Let her alone' (Mark 14. 4, 6; cf. John 12. 4-7).

Where they saw loss, He saw love. Where they saw waste, He saw worship.

Consider also the Lord's earlier commendation of the poor widow at the Temple treasury (Mark 12. 41-44).

In the runup to His own willing self-sacrifice on the cross, He cherished the willing sacrifice of others.

Two opposing mottos? Mine?

(i) 'I will do to him *as he has done* to me' (Prov. 24. 29; cf. Judg. 15. 11; Prov. 20. 22; Rom. 12. 17; 1 Thess. 5. 15).

(ii) *'As you would that others should do* to you, do so to them' (Luke 6. 31; Matt. 7. 12).

'Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father' (Mark 13. 32).

'Here, in the very act of admitting limitations to His knowledge ... He yet asserts for Himself not merely a superhuman but even a superangelic rank in the scale of being.

'In any possible interpretation of the passage, He separates Himself from the "angels in heaven" ... as belonging to a different class from them, and that a superior class ...

'Nor is this passage unique in Mark in exalting Jesus in dignity and authority above the angels. Already in the account of the temptation at the opening of His ministry, we find the angels signaled as ministering to Him (Mark 1. 13), and elsewhere they appear as (i) His subordinates swelling His train (Mark 8. 38) or (ii) His servants obeying His behests ("He shall send the angels", Mark 13. 27).

'Clearly, therefore, to Mark, *Jesus is not merely a superhuman but a superangelic personality*'.

(B. B. Warfield, *'The Lord of Glory'*, pages 36-37.)

***'Where there is no vision/revelation'*.**

1. 'Older English versions rendered the first line of Proverbs 29. 18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (KJV), or the like, which became a call for visionary leadership. But ... the issue is even more important: "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law".

'Where there is no revelation from God, grasped and obeyed, people "cast off restraint"—an apt and terrifying description of contemporary Western culture'.

(D. A. Carson, *'For the Love of God'*, Volume 2, meditation for 11 April.)

2. 'The King James translation of "vision" here is often misunderstood. The Hebrew word consistently refers to the visions in which prophets receive a revelation from God (Dan. 8. 13; Nah. 1. 1). When people have no revealed word from God, they will cast off restraint, running wild as they please. The word means to let loose or to let one's hair down (Lev. 13. 45) and was used to describe Israel's revelling with the golden calf (Exod. 32. 25). In contrast, the person who keeps God's law will be blessed'.

(Max Anders, *'Proverbs (Holman Old Testament Commentary)'*, pages 125-126.)

Faith, love and hope in 1 Thessalonians.

(i) 'Remembering without ceasing your work of *faith*, and labour of *love*, and patience of *hope* in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father' (1 Thess. 1. 3; cf. 1 Thess. 1. 9-10).

(ii) Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of *faith* and *love*; and for a helmet, the *hope* of salvation (1 Thess. 5. 8).

Echoes of the wilderness temptations of the Lord Jesus in chapters 9 and 10 of the Gospel of Luke.

'Subsequent events almost echo our Lord's three crowning wilderness temptations (Luke 4. 1-13). In order:

(i) 'When invited by the devil to turn stones into bread, Jesus had quoted the Deuteronomy passage concerning manna, the miraculous bread from heaven, and had refused to be provoked into performing a miracle (Luke 4. 2-4).

'Yet, *in Luke 9*, He performs exactly such an act, in a way that is meant to evoke the giving of manna (Luke 9. 16-17). Jesus responds to the devil's challenge, but entirely in His own way, and in His own time.

(ii) 'The devil had "led Him up to a high place" to tempt him with worldly power (Luke 4. 5-7).

'Again, *in Luke 9*, it is Jesus who takes the initiative in "leading people up"—when He takes His apostles "up the mountain" (Luke 9. 28-35). There, He is transfigured in divine glory and appears with Moses and Elijah, as God proclaims His Sonship. This scene reverses the earlier one. Jesus will indeed go up to "a high place" where He will receive immeasurable "honour and glory" (2 Pet. 1. 17), far beyond mere kingly rule, and He will achieve it through His obedience to God, not to Satan.

(iii) 'In the third temptation, the devil had quoted from verses 11 and 12 of Psalm 91 (Luke 4. 9-11) but had stopped short of quoting verse 13 ("You will tread on ... the adder ... and the serpent you will trample underfoot").

'*In Luke 10*, Jesus sends out His seventy-two disciples, with healing as a core part of their mission (Luke 10. 1). 'On their return, the disciples joyfully report their triumphs: "the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us through your name. And He said to them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10. 17-19).

'I suggest that Jesus is there paraphrasing verse 13 of Psalm 91. Reinforcing this identification is the assurance that "nothing shall by any means hurt" the believer, which recalls "no evil (no harm) shall befall you" (Psa. 91. 10). Jesus is accepting the devil's original challenge and overcoming it. Satan had invited Jesus to plummet from a pinnacle of the Temple; in contrast, he himself has fallen from heaven'.

'Point by point, the wilderness story has come full circle'.

(Adapted slightly from P. Jenkins, *'Three Temptations and Three Triumphs'*, accessed at ... [https://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2025/04/three-temptations-and-three-triumphs-2/.](https://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2025/04/three-temptations-and-three-triumphs-2/))

(iii) Go on, smile.

The local Community Centre has quite a few married couples who have enjoyed lengthy marriages.

And so, one day, the Board of Trustees organises an event with the title, 'How to stay married for a long time'. They invite members who have been married for 30 years or more to talk about their marriages.

One member who turns up at the event is Cyril. He has been married for almost 50 years to Betty, who is widely known to be a difficult and cantankerous woman.

The chairman, Henry Billings, invites Cyril to give the audience an insight into how he's been able to survive almost half a century with Betty.

Cyril stands up and explains, 'It's quite simple really. I have always treated Betty with respect, have given her whatever she asks for and have taken all her flack and grumbles with a smile'.

'Now, tell us honestly, Cyril', Henry follows on, 'is that really all that you have done?'

'Well, no', Cyril replies, 'on special occasions, I have taken Betty to faraway places'.

'Tell us, Cyril—where', asks Henry, 'did you take Betty on the last special occasion?'

'On our 40th wedding anniversary', Cyril answered, 'I took Betty to a remote area north of Beijing in China'.

'Wow!' says Henry, 'Now that is really something. If only all husbands would follow your example. But before you sit down, Cyril, tell us, please, what you're planning to do on your forthcoming 50th anniversary?'

'Oh', Cyril replies, 'that's an easy one. *I'm going to Beijing to bring Betty back*'.