

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 30 June 2025.

(i) Scripture.

The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; He utters His voice, the earth melts.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, how He has brought desolations on the earth.

He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; He burns the chariots with fire.

"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

Psalm 46. 6-10 (*English Standard Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted' (Psa. 46. 10).

Verse 8 issues a challenge to the raging nations, those setting themselves up as enemies against God and His people. It's almost a taunt, and also an invitation to any among God's people who might be fearful: "Come, behold the works of the Lord, how He has brought desolations on the earth". Enemies, be warned. Friends, be emboldened. Remember, all God has to do is say the word ...in His perfect timing, He makes wars cease, breaks bows, shatters shields, burns chariots and siege works with fire (Psa. 46. 9) ...

Verse 10 issues another word of invitation, again both to raging nations and God's fearful people. And this is the climactic statement of the psalm. Raging seas and shaking earth, raging nations and shaking people, "Be still, and know that I am God".

'Did you catch that change of voice? The first invitation, verse 8, is from the psalmist: "Come, behold the works of the Lord". But now, in verse 10, God himself speaks. He speaks into the chaos, into the raging and tottering, and says, simply, "Be still". That is, Lay down your weapons. Cease your warring and deconstruction. Cease your plotting and disorder. "Be still"—a rebuke to the raging nations ...

'Psalm 46 is not the last time the voice of the Lord uttered, "Be still". God himself, in human flesh, slept in the middle of a raging storm (Mark 4. 38). His disciples panicked ... when they woke Him, Jesus was not frantic but spoke stillness into the crisis: "Peace! Be still". And the calm of His own spirit settled over the raging sea: "the wind ceased, and there was a great calm" (Mark 4. 39) ...

'In Him, and only in Him, come together the saving strength and presence and exaltation of the One to whom we turn in crisis, and who speaks, "Peace, be still" into the raging storm of our soul'.

(D. Mathis, 'Be Still and Know', accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/be-still-and-know>.)

'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound' (Rom. 5. 20).

'The Bible is clear: God does not match our sins with His grace. He overmatches our abounding sins with His surplus of hyper-grace ... The whole logical structure of the biblical gospel is summed up in two simple words: "much more" (Rom. 5. 9, 10, 15, 17, 20). Your worst sin is far overshadowed by His "much more" grace.

'Excuse me for being blunt, but you've met your match. You are not such a spectacular sinner that your sin can defeat the Saviour. You might as well give in, come out of hiding, and wave the white flag of surrender. What awaits you and me, right down at our lowest rock bottom, is the finished work of Christ on the cross'.

(Ray Ortlund, 'Good News at Rock Bottom', 2025, Chapter 3.)

'Is there not a cause?' (1 Sam. 17. 29).

Consider the words of the Lord Jesus:

(i) Following the request of 'certain Greeks' to see Him, 'Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again' (John 12. 27-28);

(ii) In response to Pilate during His secular trial, 'For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth' (John 18. 37).

Prayer and contentment.

'We already have most of the ingredients of a happy life. It's just that we tend to take these for granted and concentrate on our unfulfilled desires. Giving thanks in prayer focuses attention on the good and helps us keep a sense of proportion about the rest. It's better than shopping—and cheaper too'.

(J. Sacks, 'Letters to the Next Generation', page 37.)

God doesn't do things by halves.

When offering to grant a large request, earthly monarchs and rulers in both Old and New Testaments have used the hyperbolic, proverbial expression, 'up to half of my kingdom'. (Compare, 'the man of God said to the king, "If you give me half your house, I will not go in with you"', 1 Kings 13. 8.)

1. King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) of Persia:

'The king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even up to half of my kingdom"' (Esther 5. 3).

'The king said to Esther, "What is your wish? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even up to half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled" (Esther 5. 6).

'The king again said to Esther, "What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even up to half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled" (Esther 7. 2).

2. King Herod Antipas ('the tetrarch') of Galilee and Perea.

'He swore to her ('the daughter of Herodias), "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom" (Mark 6. 23). (In any event, Antipas could not have literally given away half of his kingdom because he lacked the authority to do so.)

But, praise God, He 'doesn't do things by halves'. He gives (literally and not figurately), not 'up to half' of an earthly kingdom but a far greater kingdom in its entirety: 'Fear not, little flock; for *it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*' (Luke 12. 32; cf. Col. 1. 13; Heb. 12. 28; James 2. 5).

'Each must give as he has purposed in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver' (2 Cor. 9. 7).

'All our possessions are gifts (cf. "all things come from you, and of your own have we given you", 1 Chron. 29. 14). God "loves a cheerful giver", that is, one who imitates God's own limitless generosity ... 'Paul weaves together the generosity of God and the responding generosity of the community ... A "cheerful giver" is one who gives in joy and without grudge or reluctance, thus reflecting God's own cheerful generosity'.

(W. Brueggemann, 'Money and Possessions', page 222.)

'Providence'.

1. 'God's providence is greatly to be observed, but we are not to make it the rule of our actions ... It is good to observe providence, but we must not make it our rule to walk by. Providence is a Christian's diary, but not his Bible ... We must not think the better of what is sinful, because it is successful. This is no rule for our actions to be directed by'.

(Thomas Watson, 'A Body of Divinity', page 123.)

2. 'Initially, all seemed to go well for the fugitive prophet (Jonah).

'He arrived safely at Joppa, where, it so happens, some 800 years later we meet another famous preacher with a marked reluctance to carry God's message to the Gentiles (Acts 10. 8-43).

'Certainly, providence seemed to smile on Jonah's plans, for at Joppa he found a ship going to his intended destination. We have to learn that circumstances by themselves are no safe guide to the will of God for us. For, if circumstances alone are a believer's yardstick, Moses should have held on to his position as son of Pharaoh's daughter (Heb. 11. 24), David should have slain the Lord's anointed (1 Sam. 24 and 26) and Jonah was right in heading for Tarshish'.

('The Minor Prophets', Precious Seed Publications, page 105—reproduced with kind permission.)

3. 'Jonah was minded to run away from his Master's service, and he 'met with a providence,' as we say; but providence is never an excuse for sin.

'He went down to Joppa, and there he found a ship going to Tarshish, and I dare say he said to himself, "How providential!" But there is a devil's providence as well as a divine providence, and, sometimes, the devil's providence may seem to us to be the more important, and to show us the most direct way, but it is not really so'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'Stormy winds: a prayer-meeting address, 3 February 1868'; accessed at ... https://gracegems.org/Spurgeon/spurgeons_prayer_meeting_address.htm.)

'The Parable of the Sower' (alternatively, 'The Parable of the Soil').

'There are three things which lead to unfruitfulness in the unprepared soil—the birds of the air, the rock and the thorns (Mark 4. 4-7) which, according to our Lord's explanation, correspond with the power of the devil, the flesh, and the world (Mark 4. 15-19) ... The secret of the four different results lies in the position that the seed is allowed to occupy. It has been well and tersely described thus: "In the first, the seed was **on**, but **not in**, in the second, it was **on**, and **in**, but **not down**, in the third, it was **on**, and **in**, and **down**, but **not up**; and in the fourth (the "good" soil (Mark 4. 8, 20), it was **on**, and **in**, and **down**, and **up**'.

(A. Habershon, 'The Study of the Parables', pages 282-282—emphases mine.)

'Thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit"' (Isa. 57. 15).

1. God has two addresses—two places of residence—two palaces:

- (i) in heaven ... 'in the high and holy place', and
- (ii) in the human heart ... 'with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit'.

2. 'For similar juxtapositions, see:

- (i) "The heaven is my throne.... Yet to such a one I look: to the poor and broken-hearted" (Isa. 66. 1-2);
- (ii): "For He looks down from His holy height. The Lord beholds the earth from heaven to hear the groans of the prisoner, to release those condemned to death" (Psa. 102. 20–21);
- (iii) "Who is like the Lord our God, who, enthroned on high, sees what is below, in heaven and on earth? He raises the poor from the dust, lifts up the needy from the refuse heaps" (Psa. 113. 5–7);
- (iv) "High though the Lord is, He sees the lowly" (Ps. 138. 6)'.
(S. M. Paul, 'Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary', page 475.)

3. (i) His rank as supreme. "The High and Lofty One."

(ii) His existence as eternal. "That inhabiteth eternity."

(iii) His nature as unsullied. "Whose name is Holy."

(Anon, 'The Biblical Illustrator', comment on Isa. 57. 15.)

Five contrasts between the men in the plain of Shinar and Abraham (Gen. 11. 1-9; 12. 1-4).

(i) 'In attempting to avoid being scattered (Gen. 11. 4), they set out to disobey God's command, which was to "multiply ... in the earth" (Gen. 9. 7); in leaving Ur, Abram "obeyed" the command of God (Heb. 11. 8).

(ii) 'As a consequence of these actions, they brought on themselves God's judgment (Gen. 11. 7-9); while Abram secured for himself God's blessing (Gen. 12. 2).

(iii) 'Theirs was a city "which the children of men builded" (Gen. 11. 5); the city for which he looked had God for its builder and maker (Heb. 11. 10).

(iv) 'Their city was never finished, "they left off to build the city" (Gen. 11. 8); for him, God "has prepared" a city (Heb. 11. 16).

(v) 'They wished to make their "name" great (Gen. 11. 4); to him, God gave the promise that He would make his "name" great (Gen. 12. 2)'.
(*'Day by Day Through the Old Testament'*, Precious Seed Publications, 1982, page 21—reproduced with kind permission.)

'They said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower' (Gen. 11. 4).

'The pride that erected this tower is the same pride that necessitated the erection of the cross on which Jesus died'.

(P. D. Tripp, 'Everyday gospel Bible', page 14.)

'No respect of persons'.

(i) 'You shall not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; you shall judge your neighbour in righteousness' (Lev. 19. 15).

(ii) 'You shall not respect persons in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great' (Deut. 1. 17).

(iii) 'You shall not pervert judgment; you shall not respect persons' (Deut. 16. 19).

(iv) 'There is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons' (2 Chron. 19. 7).

(v) 'To have respect of persons in judgment is not good' (Prov. 24. 23; cf. Prov. 28. 21).

(vi) 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respector of persons' (Acts 10. 34).

(vii) 'There is no respect of persons with God' (Rom. 2. 11).

(viii) 'Masters, do the same things to them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in Heaven. There is no respect of persons with Him' (Eph. 6. 9).

(ix) 'He who does wrong shall receive for the wrong which he did, and there is no respect of persons' (Col. 3. 25).

(x) 'Do not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons' (James 2. 1).

(xi) 'If you have respect of persons, you commit sin' (James 2. 9).

(xii) 'If you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to the work of each one, pass the time of your sojourn in fear' (1 Pet. 1. 17).

'He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified"' (Isa. 49. 3).

'In the first six verses of Isaiah 49, the Servant of the Lord speaks. Who is He? ...

'What is most striking about this Servant is something that at first appears to be a striking confusion. God addresses Him in these terms: "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (Isa. 49. 3) —so the Servant is Israel. Yet the Lord calls this Servant "to bring Jacob back to Him and gather Israel to Himself" (Isa. 49. 5)—which distinguishes this Servant from Israel and represents Him as Israel's saviour. Why?

'As in Isaiah 42, this Servant embodies all that Israel should have been. This Servant is an ideal Israel, God's perfect Servant—and thus a figure different from empirical Israel, and one that is able to save empirical Israel'.

(D. A. Carson, 'For the Love of God', Volume 2, comment for 17 June.)

'I will pray the Father for you' (John 14. 16); 'I do not say to you that I will pray the Father for you' (John 16. 26).

'Our Saviour states, "I do not say to you that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you" (John 16. 26-27). This raises the question, why does He say, "I do not say that I will pray the Father for you", when He had clearly stated earlier, "I will pray the Father for you" (John 14. 16)?

'The disciples were fully convinced of Christ's deep and tender affection towards them, as well as His ongoing care and kindness. With all the gracious words, the comforting and faithful promises from their Master, and His openness with them, they were assured that He would not forget them once He was physically absent. However, their concerns were now focused on the Father. They wondered how they would be accepted by Him and what His feelings towards them were.

'Our Saviour essentially tells them:

"Do not worry about that. You do not need me to secure the Father's love for you. Rather, understand that His special regard for you and your status in Him is this: 'He Himself loves you'.

"It is true, indeed (as I have mentioned), that I will pray for the Father to send you the Spirit, the Comforter, and with Him, all the gracious fruits of His love. But as for this love itself, His free and eternal love for you, there is no need for me to intercede for that. For the Father Himself loves you profoundly ...

"If you are worried about the Father's love, understand that there is no greater way to trouble and burden Him than by your disbelief in it".

(John Owen 'Communion with God: Updated English by Dr R. J. K. Law', 2022.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Wishful thinking.

1. Ian and Esther had opposite work schedules.

Ian, who tended to be superstitious, worked during the day as a teacher. Esther, who was always very practical, worked the night shift as a nurse.

One morning, Esther noticed that Ian had left a note to himself on the kitchen counter which read, 'Stamps'.

As a surprise for him, Esther bought some stamps at the local post office and put them on the counter before going to work.

The next morning, Esther found the same note on the counter. But the word 'Stamps' had been crossed out.

Underneath it,

Ian had written, 'One thousand pounds'.

2. Sam was out shopping when he met his friend Alec. Sam noticed that Alec has a small gift-wrapped box in his hand.

'Tell me, Alec', Sam asked, 'what have you been buying?'

'Since you've asked', replied Alec, 'it's my wife's birthday tomorrow. When I asked her this morning what she wanted for her birthday, she said, "I really don't know, dear, but it would be lovely to have something with diamonds in it".'

'Well', Sam enquired, 'what did you get her?'

Smiling, Alec replied,

'I bought her a pack of playing cards'.