

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 19 July 2021

Greetings.

First, the solution to last week's short poetic riddle: David.

Second, a very easy riddle for this week:

'I once fooled a close family member into believing that *the younger was the elder*.
But I reaped what I sowed when, later, another family member
fooled me into believing that *the elder was the younger*'.

Who am I? And where in the Bible are these two incidents recorded?

Third, an anniversary.

Tomorrow (20 July) marks the 52nd anniversary of the date in 1969 when the Lunar Module Eagle of the Apollo 11 mission landed on the Moon. The following day, the American astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin stepped down from the Lunar Module to put the first human footprints on the surface of the Moon.

I reproduce below an extract from the document which I attached to the Monday Musings for 29 March this year.

It was three and a half days later (on 24th July 1969) that the Apollo 11 spacecraft splashed down in the Pacific Ocean, 825 nautical miles southwest of Honolulu. Two hours after splashdown, the then President of the United States, Richard Nixon, greeted the newly arrived astronauts.

In his own words: 'When I talked with them through the window of their quarantine chamber, it was hard to contain my enthusiasm or my awe at the thought that the three men on the other side of the glass had just returned from the moon. I said impulsively, "This is the greatest week in the history of the world since the Creation".'

This 'impulsive' statement earned the President a gentle word of rebuke from his friend, Billy Graham: "Mr President, I know exactly how you felt, and I understand exactly what you meant, but, even so, I think you may have been a little excessive".

You and I can safely say that it was *more than "a little excessive"*! But I am *not* going to claim that the events of the first 'Passion Week' (or 'Holy Week', as some know it) made it (to borrow Richard Nixon's words), 'the greatest week in the history of the world since the Creation'.
I *am* going to claim that the events of that first 'Passion Week' made it **the greatest week ever!**

Amen and Amen!

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

(i) Scripture.

He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up.

But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, 'Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity'. And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, 'There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day'.

The Lord then answered him and said, 'Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So, ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?'

And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

Luke 13. 10-17 (*The New King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Behold' in Genesis 28:

- (i) 'Behold a ladder' (Gen. 28. 12).
- (ii) 'Behold the angels' (Gen. 28. 12).
- (iii) 'Behold, the Lord' (Gen. 28. 13).
- (iv) 'Behold, I am with you' (Gen. 28. 15).

The Universal Gospel.

The Duke of Wellington once met a young clergyman, who, being aware of his Grace's former residence in the East, and of his familiarity with the ignorance and obstinacy of the Hindus in support of their false religion, gravely proposed the following question: "Does not your Grace think it almost useless and absurd to preach the gospel to the Hindus?"

The Duke immediately rejoined: "Look, sir, to your marching orders, 'Preach the gospel to every creature'".

(J. S. Exell, *The Biblical Illustrator*, volume 4.)

'Only' – a gospel outline.

- (i) 'Leaves only' (Matt. 21. 19).
- (ii) 'Jesus only' (Mark 9. 8).
- (iii) 'Believe only' (Luke 8. 50).

'The gift of God is eternal life' (Rom. 6. 23).

During the Spanish War, the late President Roosevelt, then a colonel, commanded a regiment of rough-riders in Cuba. He became much attached to his men and was greatly concerned when a number of them fell sick.

Hearing that Miss Clara Barton (the lady who devoted herself to the work of nursing the wounded soldiers) had received a supply of delicacies for the invalids under her care, Colonel Roosevelt requested her to sell a portion of them for the sick men of his regiment.

His request was refused. The Colonel was very troubled; he cared for his men and was willing to pay for supplies out of his own pocket. "How can I get these things?" he asked. "I must have proper food for my sick men".

"Just ask for them, Colonel".

"Oh!" said Roosevelt, his face breaking into a smile, "That's the way, is it? Then I do ask for them".

And he got them at once'.

(A. Naismith, *1200 Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes*, number 446.)

At Thessalonica.

- (i) The preacher's authority – 'the Scriptures' (Acts 17. 2).
- (ii) The preacher's theme – 'Christ' (Acts 17. 3).
- (iii) The preacher's power – 'the Holy Spirit' (1 Thess. 1. 5).
- (iv) The preacher's character – 'holy, righteous and blameless' (1 Thess. 2. 10).

Three rainbows

- (i) The rainbow of grace (Gen. 9. 13).
- (ii) The rainbow of government (Ezek. 1. 28).
- (iii) The rainbow of glory (Rev. 4. 3).

'Since the days of'.

(i) Hezekiah's celebration of a Feast of the Lord eclipsed all others '*since the days of* Solomon (2 Chron. 30. 26).

(ii) Josiah's celebration of a Feast of the Lord eclipsed all others '*since the days of* Samuel (2 Chron. 35. 18).

(iii) Ezra and Nehemiah's celebration of a Feast of the Lord eclipsed all others '*since the days of* Joshua (Neh. 8. 17).

Four (k)nots to untie.

- (i) 'Fret not' (Psa. 37. 1).
- (ii) 'Forget not' (Psa. 103. 2).
- (iii) 'Faint not' (2 Cor. 4. 1).
- (iv) 'Fear not' (Rev. 1. 17).

The three Rs (not "reading, writing, and 'rithmetic") in 1 Peter 1. 18-23.

- (i) Redemption by blood (1 Pet. 1. 18-19).
- (ii) Resurrection by power (1 Pet. 1. 21).

(iii) Regeneration by word (1 Pet. 1. 23).

Three examples of God's writing.

(i) On 'the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone' (Exod. 31. 18).

(ii) On 'the wall of the king's palace' (Dan 5. 5).

(iii) On 'fleshy tablets of the heart' (2 Cor. 3. 3).

Three Bible characters who were stricken with leprosy, 'as white as snow'.

(i) Moses – as partial judgment on his *unbelief* (Exod. 4. 6 with verse 1).

(ii) Miriam – as judgment on her *envy* (Num. 12. 10 with verses 1-2).

(iii) Gehazi – as judgment on his *covetousness* (2 Kings 5. 27 with verse 22).

(The Hebrew expression (מצרעת כשלג) is identical in all three cases.)

Men and women whom Jesus 'saw' in the Gospel of Luke.

(i) 'He saw their faith' (Luke 5. 20). Leading to *forgiveness and healing*.

(ii) He 'saw a tax collector named Levi' (Luke 5. 27). Leading to a *call to follow*.

(iii) 'When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her' (Luke 7. 13). Leading to *comfort, restoration and reunion*.

(iv) 'Jesus saw her' (Luke 13. 12). Leading to *freedom from the 'bond' of Satan*.

(v) 'When He saw them, He said ... "Go, show yourselves to the priests"' (Luke 17. 14). Leading to *cleansing from leprosy*.

(vi) 'He looked up, and saw him' (Luke 19. 5). Leading to *salvation*.

(vii) 'He saw also a certain poor widow' (Luke 21. 2). Leading to *commendation*.

At the feet of the apostles in Acts 4 and 5.

(i) A striking pattern of united giving: 'the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul ... all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them **at the apostles' feet**' (Acts 4. 32-35).

(ii) A splendid example of individual giving: 'Joses, who was also named Barnabas ... a Levite ... having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it **at the apostles' feet**' (Acts 4. 37). A Levite who *didn't* pass 'by on the other side' (Luke 10. 32)!

(iii) A salutary warning against hypocritical giving: 'a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession and kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it **at the apostles' feet** ... Ananias ... fell down and breathed his last ... his wife ... fell down **at (the apostle Peter's) feet** and breathed her last' (Acts 5. 1-10).

'The story of Ananias is to the book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua. In both narratives, an act of deceit interrupts the victorious progress of the people of God. It may be that the author of Acts himself wished to point this comparison: when he says that Ananias "kept back" part of the price (Acts 5. 2), he uses the same Greek word as is used in the Greek version of Josh. 7. 1 where it is said that the Israelites (represented by Achan) "broke faith" by retaining for private use property that had been devoted to God'.

(F. F. Bruce, 'The Book of Acts (The New International Commentary on the New Testament)', page 102.)

'If the devil's first tactic was to destroy the church by force from without, his second was to destroy it by falsehood from within'.

(John Stott, 'The Message of Acts', page 112.)

The Holy Spirit in relation to Christ.

(i) In His Incarnation (Luke 1. 35) —Begetting.

(ii) In His Temptation (Matt. 4. 1) —Leading.

(iii) In His Atonement (Heb. 9. 14) —Offering.

(iv) In His Resurrection (1 Pet. 3. 18) —Quickening.

(John Ritchie, quoted in Al Bryant, 'Sermon Outlines for Special Occasions', page 31.)

The love of Christ in Revelation. 1. 5.

'The true translation is not "who loved us" but "who loves us".'

His love is an abiding love ... Our sins, our weaknesses, our infirmities and failures can never affect or diminish His love ... Whatever our circumstances are, in trials, in the hard places, in troubles, burdened with cares and full of anxiety, in all our failures, we can look up and say, "He loves me".

It is an ever present and eternal love. Never measure that love by your changing feeling or by your experience. And this love He manifested by dying for us. He has "washed us from our sins in His own blood".

A. C. Gaebelien, 'The Glory Song', The Lord of Glory, page 34.)

'He loves me still'.

Though lofty motives aim in vain,
And miss the mark for lack of skill,
This moves the hand to try again:

He loves me still; he loves me still.

Though failure prostrates in the dust,
And tears hope's empty cup may fill,
This helps the contrite heart to trust:
He loves me still; He loves me still.

(I. Y. Ewan, *'He Loves Me Still'*, The Caravanserai, page 225.)

'Then' – when the Lord Jesus returns.

(i) The 'then' of *glory*. 'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory' (Col. 3. 4).

(ii) The 'then' of *victory over death*. 'Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory"' (1 Cor. 15. 54).

(iii) The 'then' of *reunion*. 'Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air' (1 Thess. 4. 17).

(iv) The 'then' of *perfect knowledge*. 'Then then shall I know even as also I am known' (1 Cor. 13. 12).

(v) The 'then' of *commendation*. 'Then shall each have his praise from God' (1 Cor. 4. 5).

'Avenge not yourselves' (Rom. 12. 19).

Abigail said to David: 'When the Lord ... has appointed you prince over Israel, my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord taking vengeance himself' (1 Sam. 25. 30-31).

'If David had placed himself forward thus to the time of his glory, he would never have thought of ... shedding causeless blood; whereas we know that his hands were nearly imbrued ['saturated'] in that of the very young men who spoke so kindly of him to Abigail (verses 14-17.)

Had he thought, "How, in the hour of my glory, will this action appear to me?" he would have been checked.

The place of faith is always to look beyond present circumstances, on to the time of the end ... thus it was with Abigail.

In the most trying things which happen to us, if we can by faith see (God) with us as ... the One who hath said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord", we shall never feel disposed to avenge ourselves'.

(Anon., *'Abigail, The Wife of Nabal the Carmelite'*, The Christian's Friend (1875), page 232.)

'Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble' (Prov. 21. 23).

Conversely, a loose tongue will often get you into a tight corner.

Men who had good reason to eat their own words (*).

(i) Goliath of Gath: who said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field"' (1 Sam. 17. 44).

(ii) The Jebusites of Jerusalem: 'who said to David, "You will not come in here"' (2 Sam. 5. 6).

(iii) Milton Wright of Ohio, a 19th century bishop in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, who 'pronounced from his pulpit and in the periodical he edited that heavier-than-air flight was both impossible and contrary to the will of God'.

(Robert P. Dugan, Jr., *'Winning the New Civil War'*, page 38.)

Ironically, Bishop Wright had two sons, Orville and Wilbur, whose flight at Kitty Hawk on 17 December 1903 is the most widely accepted date for the beginning of "heavier-than-air" aviation! A case, you might say, where 'Wright' was wrong!

(*) It is claimed that 'The term first appeared in a sixteenth-century tract by John Calvin on Psalm 62: "God eateth not His word when He hath once spoken"' – source: <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/eat+words>. However, the English translation of Calvin's comments as quoted is that of Arthur Golding in 1571 and I note that Thomas Cranmer (the Archbishop of Canterbury) used the expression, 'else eat your own words again', twenty years before, in a treatise dated 1551.

(iii) Go on, smile.

Old-age complaints

1. An elderly female patient complained to her doctor: 'Doctor, when I touch my left shoulder it's very painful ... when I touch my abdomen it's very painful ... and when I touch the side of my head it's also very painful! What do you think is wrong with me?'

'My professional opinion', the doctor replied, '*is that your index finger is broken!*'

2. An elderly man limped into the doctor's office. 'Doctor', he said, 'my knee hurts so bad that I can hardly walk!'

The doctor slowly eyed him from head to toe, paused for a moment and then asked kindly, 'Mr Davies, tell me, how old are you?'

'I'm coming up to 98', the man announced proudly.

The doctor sighed quietly. Looking at the elderly man again, he said, 'Mr Davies, just look at yourself. You will soon be a hundred years old and here you are complaining that your knee hurts. Come on now, honestly, at your age, what do you expect?'

'But', the elderly patient objected, '*my other knee is 98 years old too, and it doesn't hurt!*'