

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 23 October 2023

(i) Scripture.

Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came unto Him; and He sat down, and taught them.

And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him.

But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not.

So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord.

And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

John 8. 2-11 (*King James Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more' (John 8. 11).

'In John 8 we find brought by the scribes and Pharisees before Jesus, one who by the law was worthy of being stoned—undeniably guilty—that He might be obliged to deny either mercy or righteousness.

'This was their motive. They thought to place Him in an inextricable difficulty. If He should let her off, He would break the law of Moses; but, should He say, "let her be stoned", it would be no more than Moses had done.

'How does He act? He let law and righteousness have all their course; but tells her accusers at the same time, "he that is without sin amongst you, let him first cast a stone at her". Conscience begins to work; not rightly, it is true, for their character was what they cared about; still it would speak; and they get out of the presence of light, because the light made manifest what they were—it proved them sinners.

'From the eldest to the youngest, all went out. He that had the reputation of the longest standing was glad to be the first to go away from that eye which could penetrate and detect what was within; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

'He would not execute the law; for He came not to judge: "neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more" ... Whenever one stood before Him, or had anything to do with Him as a detected and confessed sinner, it was always grace, and all grace. The more the discovered sin, the more grace was revealed, free and unqualified.'

(J. N. Darby, 'Parables of Luke 15', Collected Writings, Volume 12, pages 161-162.)

Our Lord's gifts in the Gospel according to John.

(i) Living Water: 'The water that I shall give' (John 4. 14).

(ii) Sustaining Bread: 'Bread that I will give' (John 6. 51).

(iii) Eternal Life: 'I give unto them eternal life' (John 10. 28).

(iv) Humble Example: "I have given you an example" (John 13. 15).

(v) New Commandment: 'A new commandment I give to you' (John 13. 34).

(vi) Settled Peace: 'My peace I give unto you' (John 14. 27).

(vii) Revealed Words: 'I have given unto them your word' (John 17. 14).

(viii) Conferred Glory: 'The glory which you have given me I have given them' (John 17. 22).

'The Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden' (Gen. 3. 23).

'The terrible, tragic fallacy of the last hundred years has been to think that all man's troubles are due to his environment, and that to change the man you have nothing to do but change his environment. That is a tragic fallacy. It overlooks the fact that it was in Paradise that man fell.'

(D. M. Lloyd-Jones, 'Studies in the Sermon on the Mount', page 110.)

God speaks of (or to) the Lord Jesus as:

- (i) **Sovereign:** 'I have set my King on Zion' (Psa. 2. 6);
- (ii) **Son:** 'The Lord has said to me, "You are my Son"' (Psa. 2. 7; cf. Matt. 3. 17; 17. 5; Mark 1. 11; 9. 7; Luke 3. 22; 9. 35; Acts 13. 33; Heb. 1. 5; 5. 5; 2 Pet. 1. 17):
- (iii) **Servant:** 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold' (Isa. 42. 1; cf. Isa. 52. 13; 53. 11; Matt. 12. 18);
- (iv) **Shepherd:** 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd' (Zech. 13. 7).

'Great is the mystery ... God was manifest in the flesh' (1 Tim. 3. 16).

Here are profound mysteries indeed:

(i) He is the One of whom it is said, 'Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary' (Isa. 40. 28).

Yet we read, 'Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well' (John 4. 6).

(ii) He is the One who said, 'Every beast of the forest is mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills ... If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is mine, and all its fulness. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?' (Psa. 50. 10-13).

Yet we read, 'When He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry' (Matt. 4. 2), 'In the morning, as He was returning to the city, He became hungry' (Matt. 21. 18) and 'knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst"' (John 19. 28).

(iii) He is the One of whom it is said, 'He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep' (Psa. 121. 3-4).

Yet we read, 'A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow' (Mark 4. 37-38).

'They offered Him wine mixed with myrrh, but He did not take it' (Mark 15. 23).

'That was a sedative designed to dull the agony, and Jesus refused to drink it. He was fully resolved to drink, instead, the cup of suffering the Father had assigned Him ["Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" (John 18. 11)]'.

(D. A. Carson, 'The Gospel according to John', page 620).

Our Lord's divine Sonship declared following (i) the rent heavens and (ii) the rent veil.

(i) When recording our Lord's baptism, Mark says: 'it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens rent (Greek, σχιζω), and the Spirit as a dove descending upon Him: and a voice came out of the heavens, 'You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased' (Mark 1. 9-11).

(ii) When recording our Lord's death, Mark says, 'Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed out ('and expired'). And the veil of the temple was rent (Greek, σχιζω), in two from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, who stood over against Him, saw that He thus expired, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God' (Mark 15. 37-39).

Interestingly, as Mark notes, both our Lord's baptism and our Lord's death led immediately to a clear declaration of our Lord's unique divine sonship:

(i) on the one hand, a declaration made by a voice out of heaven—that of the Father: 'You are my beloved Son' and,

(ii) on the other hand, a declaration made by a voice on earth—that of the centurion: 'Truly this man was the Son of God'.

The Father proclaimed our Lord's divine Sonship immediately following the 'rending' ('the cleaving', 'the tearing apart') of the heavens, and the centurion proclaimed our Lord's divine Sonship immediately following the 'rending' ('the cleaving', 'the tearing apart') of the veil of the Temple.

Given such unmistakable bookends to our Lord's public ministry, it is hardly surprising that Mark opens his Gospel with the words, 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' (Mark 1. 1).

((Lightly edited notes of a short devotional meditation given in July 2018.)

'We love, because He first loved us' (1 John 4. 19).

(i) 'No man loves God except the man who has first learned that God loves him ... The fountain that rises in my heart can only spring up heavenward, because the water of it has flowed down into my heart from the higher level'.

(Alexander Maclaren, 'The Gospel according to St. John', page 369.)

(ii) 'God always makes the first move in the game of love'.

(G. S. Sloyan, 'Walking in the Truth: Perseverers and Deserters', page 49.)

Isaiah 40. 10-11: one arm to govern but both arms to gather.

(i) 'Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and His arm rules for Him' (Isa. 40. 10).

(ii) 'He will tend His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arms' (Isa. 40. 11).

'I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you' (Isa. 48. 17 NIV).

'We shall not be doomed to death or life, according to the hectoring spirits of the world; but according to the Wisdom and Law of the Highest. Therefore, thought I, what God says is best, is best though all the men in the world are against it'.

(John Bunyan, 'Pilgrim's Progress' {the words of 'Faithful'}, page 82.)

Passing the buck.

(i) Adam and Eve. 'The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate". Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Gen. 3. 12-13).

(ii) King Saul. "Saul went out to meet Samuel and greet him. Samuel said, 'What have you done?'" (1 Sam 13. 10-11).

'Saul's explanation? It was the people's fault: "the people were scattered from me". And it was your fault, too, Samuel: "you did not come within the days appointed". And of course, it was the enemy's fault, too: "the Philistines gathered together at Michmash" ... I wasn't acting in self-will; everyone else forced me into it'.

(J. B. Nicholson Jr, 'The Blame Game', Taste and See, Uplook Ministries, 6 October 2023.)

'In everything give thanks' (1 Thess. 5. 18).

'I have learned that in every circumstance that comes my way, I can choose to respond in one of two ways: I can whine or I can worship! And, I can't worship without giving thanks. It just isn't possible'.

(N. DeMoss Wolgemuth, 'Choosing Gratitude: Your Journey to Joy', page 23.)

'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Gal. 6. 14).

'Every time we look at the cross, Christ seems to say to us, "I am here because of you. It is your sin I am bearing, your curse I am suffering, your debt I am paying, your death I am dying". Nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross'.

(John Stott, 'The Message of Galatians', page 179.)

The angel Gabriel.

From the messages which the angel Gabriel brings during his four appearances on the page of Scripture, it seems that Gabriel is God's messenger concerning God's programme for Israel:

(i) 'I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. So he came near ... and said, Behold, I will make you know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be. The ram which you saw having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia and the rough goat is the king of Grecia ... when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up ... he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people ... he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand' (Dan 8. 16-25).

(ii) 'While I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me ... Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon your holy city ... from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks ... after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off ... and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary ... and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease' (Dan 9. 21-27).

(iii) 'An angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias ... and said to him, Do not fear, Zacharias. For your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John ... he shall turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God ... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord ... I am Gabriel, who stands before God and I am sent to speak to you and to show you these glad tidings' (Luke 1. 11-19).

(iv) 'The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David ... and the angel said to her, Do not fear, Mary, for you have found favour with God and behold, you shall conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus ... the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end' (Luke 1. 26-33).

Compare Michael, the heavenly patron and champion of Israel: 'Michael, your prince' (Dan. 10. 21); 'Michael ... the great prince which stands for the children of your people' (Dan. 12. 1; Jude 9 and Rev. 12. 1-8).

(iii) Go on, smile.

Dr Jenkins.

1. Ethel Webster rushed to see her doctor, Dr Jenkins. When she arrived, Ethel was very agitated and distraught.

'Dr Jenkins', Ethel burst out, 'just look at me. When I woke up this morning, I studied myself in the mirror. I could hardly believe it. I could see that my hair was all wiry, my skin was all wrinkled and pasty, my eyes were blood-shot and bulging out, and I looked terribly haggard. Tell me, doctor, is there anything seriously wrong with me?'

Dr Jenkins looked Ethel over for a couple of minutes. Finally, he said, 'Well, Mrs Webster, the good news is that I can tell you *there's nothing wrong with your eyesight*'.

2. Thirty-year-old Marcus Wainwright was unmarried. His mother had passed away a few years earlier and he lived in a nice apartment just a few miles from his father, Nigel.

Out of the blue, Nigel visited his son and gave him some bad news. 'Look, Marcus', Nigel said, 'It's become important for you to find a wife as soon as possible'. 'What's the sudden urgency, Dad?', Marcus asked.

'I'm sorry to have to tell you this, son' Nigel confided, 'but Doctor Jenkins has told me that I have only two years at most to live. I want to see you happily married before I die. I know you'll never have to worry about money then because I've left you my multi-million-pound investment business in my will ... but please, Marcus, get married before I die'.

Hugging his father tightly, Marcus promised, 'I'll do my best, Dad'.

A few weeks later, Marcus represented his father's business at a seminar on financial planning. There he noticed a very attractive woman. For Marcus, it was love at first sight.

At the end of the seminar, he approached her, gave her his name, told her how he felt and asked her name. 'Rebecca Phillips', she replied.

'Rebecca is a lovely name', Marcus said. 'Let me be open with you, Rebecca—I want to marry you. You probably think that I'm just your average kind of chap with little to offer. But that isn't the case. In a year or two from now, my sickly father, whom I dearly love and who lives on his own, is going to die from an incurable disease. When he does, I'm going to inherit his business worth many millions of pounds'.

They chatted for a while and, when time came for them to part, Rebecca asked Marcus for his business card.

One month later, Marcus received a wedding invitation:

*Rebecca Phillips and Nigel Wainwright
request the pleasure of your company
at their marriage*
on Saturday, the fourteenth of September
at two o'clock in the afternoon
at the Church of St Augustine, Brighton
followed by a reception.