

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 1 April 2024

Greetings.

Welcome back.

Many of us will have taken the opportunity over the past 'Easter' weekend to focus even more than usual on the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Speaking personally, I have reflected much on the words of the seventeenth-century hymn, 'My song is love unknown'.

By way of background, the early months of this year mark the 400th anniversary of the birth of Mr Samuel Crossman [*].

'My song is love unknown' was one of nine devotional poems composed and published by Mr Crossman in 1664.

For ease of reference, I reproduce all of the seven stanzas which I have pondered over the past few days (in each case, the emphasis is mine):

1. My song is love unknown;
My Saviour's love to me.
Love to the loveless shown.
That they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I,
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?

2. He came from His blest throne,
Salvation to bestow;
But men made strange, and none
The longed-for Christ would know.
But oh! my Friend;
My Friend indeed,
Who at my need
His life did spend!

3. Sometimes they strew His way,
And His sweet praises sing;
Resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King.
Then "Crucify!"
Is all their breath,
And for His death
They thirst and cry.

4. **Why, what hath my Lord done?**
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run;
He gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries!
Yet they at these
Themselves displease,
And 'gainst Him rise.

5. They rise, and needs will have
My dear Lord made away.
A murderer they save;
The Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful He
To suffering goes,
That He His foes
From thence might free.

6. *In life, no house, no home.*
My Lord on earth might have;
In death, no friendly tomb

But what a stranger gave.

What may I say?
Heav'n was His home;
But mine the tomb
Wherein He lay.

7. Here might I stay and sing;

No story so divine.

Never was love, dear King!

Never was grief like Thine.

This is my Friend,

In whose sweet praise

I all my days

Could gladly spend.

I set out in the following pages this week's 'Monday Musings'.

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

[*] According to the present-day calendar (the 'Gregorian', which was adopted in 1752), Mr Crossman was born early in 1624; according to the previous calendar (the 'Julian'), his birth was reckoned as early in 1623.

(i) Scripture.

Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.

Like as many were astonished at thee, (His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men,) so shall He sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand.

Isaiah 52. 13-15 (*The Revised Version*)

(ii) Food for thought.

Signed, sealed, and delivered.

(i) Signed: 'I will write on Him my new name' (Rev. 3. 12).

(ii) Sealed: 'You have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise' (Eph. 1. 13; cf. Eph. 4. 30).

(iii) Delivered: 'Who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love' (Col. 1. 13).

The Lord Jesus: not saved from dying but saved out of death.

The Lord Jesus didn't pray to be saved from dying—which He would have been had He prayed such a prayer: 'Do you think that I cannot now call upon my Father and He will furnish me with more than twelve legions of angels?' (Matt. 26. 53).

But He did pray to be saved out of death—which He was, in His resurrection: 'In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save Him out of (Greek: 'εκ') death, and He was heard because of His reverent fear' (Heb. 5. 7).

The One whose prayer was 'heard' and who, thereby, raised a friend 'who was dead' (John 11. 41-44) prayed for Himself to 'Him who was able to save Him out of death and He was heard'!

(For several key differences between the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and that of Lazarus, see the section, 'The Resurrection of Lazarus and the Resurrection of Jesus' in the document, '*The Resurrection of Lazarus: John 11. 1-45*'. This document was attached to Monday Musings 57, dated 12 July 2021 and can be accessed at <https://voicesforchrist.org/writings/195>.)

'The devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me". Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan!"' (Matt. 4. 8-9).

Just imagine! The usurper blatantly offers to give the kingdoms of the world to the rightful heir. ('The Lord said ... "Ask of me and I will give you the nations for your inheritance"', Psa. 2. 7-8.) In His response, Jesus makes it clear that He will not handle 'stolen goods'!

'Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working"' (John 5. 17).

'In a preindustrial culture, the majority of sons do what their father does. A baker's son becomes a baker; a farmer's son becomes a farmer. This stance—like father, like son—enables Jesus on occasion to refer to His own followers as "sons of God". Thus Jesus declares, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matt. 5. 9). In other words, God Himself is the supreme peacemaker; therefore, people who are peacemakers act, in this respect, like God, and therefore can be designated, in this respect, "sons of God" ...

'When challenged about His "working" on the Sabbath, He does not offer a different reading of what "Sabbath" means, or suggest that what He was doing was not "work" but some deed of mercy or necessity; rather, He justifies His "working" by saying that He is only doing what his Father does. His Father works (even on the Sabbath, or providence itself would cease!), and so does He.

'His interlocutors perceive that this is an implicit claim to equality with God: "He was even calling God his own Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5. 18). Yet almost certainly they misunderstand Jesus in one respect. They think the claim blasphemous because it would make Jesus into another God—and they are quite right to hold that there is but one God.

'Jesus responds with two points: (i) "the Son can do nothing by Himself; (ii) He can do only what He sees His Father doing" (John 5. 19). (i) First, He insists He is functionally dependent on His Father ... (ii) Yet, second, this functional subordination is itself grounded in the fact that this Son does whatever the Father does.

'Christians may be "sons of God" in certain respects; Jesus is the unique Son, in that "whatever the Father does the Son also does". If the Father creates, so does the Son: indeed, the Son is the Father's agent in creation (John 1. 2-3). In the following verses (John 5. 21-23), the Son, like the Father, raises people from the dead, and is the Father's agent in the final judgment'.

(D. A. Carson, '*For the Love of God*', Volume 1, reflections for 15 March.)

The bookends of Jesus' life on earth: the womb and the tomb.

'In the New Testament, 'the parallel between the womb and the tomb is played upon in a literary fashion.

'So, Jesus is wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger [Luke 2. 7], and then He's wrapped in linen garments and laid in the tomb [Luke 23. 53] ... Forty days after Christ's birth, He is presented in the temple [Luke 2. 22; Lev. 12. 2-8]. Forty days after His resurrection, He ascends to the heavenly temple [Acts 1. 3].

(Alastair Roberts, '*According to the Scriptures—Resurrection in the Old Testament*', accessed at <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/faith/bible-studies/according-to-the-scriptures-resurrection-in-the-old-testament>.)

'They saw that some of His disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed' (Mark 7. 2).

In line with 'the tradition of the elders', the Pharisees are occupied with the outward, with men's *hands* ('unwashed', 'defiled') and *mouths* ('ate').

In line with the word of God ('it is written'), Jesus looks deeper; He is concerned with men's *hearts*—'their heart is far from me' (Mark 7. 6).

The chief priests' twofold fear in Matthew 21.

(i) '*The chief priests* and elders ... discussed it among themselves, saying ... "But if we shall say, 'Of men'; we *fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet*"' (Matt. 21. 26).

(ii) '*The chief priests* and Pharisees ... perceived that He was speaking about them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they *feared the multitude, because they took Him for a prophet*' (Matt. 21. 46).

'Kings shall shut their mouths at Him' (Isa. 52. 15).

'The kings shut their mouths before the Servant of the Lord solely out of respect and reverence for Him.

'Job experienced something similar prior to his calamities: "When I went out to the gate through the city . . . the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth" (Job 29. 7-9). But those who are struck dumb in the presence of the exalted and glorified Messiah are not mere elders, nobles or princes—they are kings!

'At our Lord's second advent, the universal command will go out: "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord" (Zeph. 2. 13 ... Then "the nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; they shall put their hand over their mouth" (Micah 7. 16). But here it is the gentile kings who fall silent before the majesty of the King of Kings, overawed and dumbfounded in His presence. "All kings shall fall down before Him" (Psa. 72. 11) ...

'What a glorious day of reversal that will be. For God has pledged "to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth" that "kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship" (Isa. 49. 7). Yes, the One marked out by God to be the object of the reverence of kings was once the object of the derision and abhorrence of men. For "in the days of His flesh", not only rulers and those in authority, but men of all ranks and sorts *opened* "their mouths at Him".

'During *His public ministry*, (i) His *generation* described Him as, "a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners"; (ii) *the Pharisees* argued, "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons"; and (iii) *the Jews* (a) sniggered, with obvious innuendo, "We be not born of fornication", (b) sneered, "thou art a Samaritan, and hast a demon", and (c) asserted, "we know that this man is a sinner" (Matt. 11. 19; 12. 24; John 8. 41, 48; 9. 24).

'During *His passion*, men opened wide "their mouths at Him" to:

(i) *Accuse Him*: He "was accused of the chief priests and elders" (Matt. 27. 12);

(ii) *Cry out against Him*: "They cried, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him" (Luke 23. 21);

(iii) *Mock Him*: "Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked Him" (Luke 23. 11). The soldiers "put on him a scarlet robe . . . and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him" (Matt. 27. 29);

(iv) *Reville Him*: "They that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads" (Matt. 27. 39). "They that were crucified with Him reviled Him" (Mark 15. 32);

(v) *Deride Him*: "The rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the chosen of God" (Luke 23. 35);

(vi) *Rail on Him*: "One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us" (Luke 23. 39). In His grace, the Son of man had sunk so low that even a condemned malefactor could insult Him!

(vii) *Sing of Him*: It seems from Psalm 69 (one of the so-called Messianic psalms) that He was also made the butt for the drunkards; "They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards" (Psa. 69. 12).

'And through it all, "when He was reviled", He "reviled not again" (1 Pet. 2. 23). Through it all, He maintained His dignified silence.

'But in that day, kings will "shut *their* mouths" in the presence of the One who once "opened not *His* mouth" (Isa. 53. 7).

(*'Holy Ground'*, Gospel Folio Press, pages 37-39.)

'The death of the cross' (Phil. 2. 8).

(i) 'Crucifixion was intended to be seen by as many people as possible. Debasement resulting from public agony was a chief feature of the method, along with the prolonging of agony. It was a form of advertisement or public announcement—this person is the scum of the earth, not fit to live, more like an insect than a human being. The crucified wretch was pinned up like a specimen. Crosses were not placed out in the open for convenience or sanitation but for maximum public exposure'.

(F. Rutledge *'The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ'*, page 92.)

(ii) 'The bottom rung in the ladder from the Throne of God'.

(A. T. Robertson, *'Word Pictures of the New Testament'*, on Phil. 2. 8.)

'Christ our Passover has been sacrificed' (1 Pet. 5. 7).

(i) 'He said to them, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer"' (Luke 22. 15). The reason the Lord Jesus came to Jerusalem that last time wasn't only to 'eat' the Passover, but also to become our Passover.

(ii)

Paschal Lamb, Thine offering, finished
Once for all when Thou wast slain,
In its fullness undiminished
Shall for evermore remain.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Cleansing souls from every stain.

(G. H. Bourne, *'Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendour'*, fourth stanza.)

'There shall be no night there' (Rev. 21. 25; 22. 5).

The eighteenth-century composer G. F. Handel 'was at work on the second act of his opera, "Jephthah's Daughter" when his eyes grew suddenly dim. He kept at it slowly, laboriously, for several months. When he finished this work (30 August 1751) he could hardly see the notes with a magnifying glass. He underwent an operation for cataract, but in vain. Within a few months his light had been, as he expressed it, "completely blotted out".

'In the spring of 1759, there was a production of "Samson" at Covent Garden. Handel, sitting near the organ, broke down when he heard the words of the blind warrior who had been fighting all his life against the Philistines:

"Total eclipse, no sun, no moon,
All dark amidst the blaze of noon".

'When, at the end of the performance, he was led to make his customary bow to the audience he was greeted with a glorious, pathetic ovation of cheers and tears.

'A few nights later he was present at a production of his "Messiah". He suffered a fainting spell during the performance. He went home to his bed, never to rise from it again.

'He expressed the wish that he might die on Good Friday, "in the hope of joining ... my sweet Lord and Saviour, on the day of His Resurrection". (In the event,) it was in the early morning of Holy Saturday (14 April 1759) that the composer and his Messiah met face to face'.

(D. L. Thomas, *'Living Biographies of Great Composers'*, pages 32-33.)

'Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall' (1 Cor. 10. 12).

'It was "when Solomon was old" that he strayed from the Lord (1 Kings 11. 4). Yes, as the poet C. C. Miller has written,

"'Twas a sheep, not a lamb, that strayed away,
In the parable Jesus told;
A grown-up sheep that strayed away,
From the ninety and nine in the fold."
[Source: the poem, *'The Echo'*]

'We aren't beyond danger until we're Home'.

(J. B. Nicholson Jr, *'Entrapped by Success'*, Taste and See, Uplook Ministries, 21 March 2024.)

A paradox from the pen of Isaiah.

(i) 'Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing' (Isa. 43. 18).

'He promises to do yet greater things for them than He had done in the days of old; so that they should not have reason to ask, in a way of complaint, as Gideon did, "Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?" for they should see them repeated, nay, they should see them outdone'.

(Matthew Henry, '*Commentary on the Whole Bible*', comment on Isa. 46. 9-10).

(ii) 'Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done' (Isa. 46. 9).

'He produces incontestable proofs that He is God, that He and none besides is so... for proof of it He refers:

(a) To the sacred history: "Remember ... what the God of Israel did for His people in their beginnings ... that which no one else could, and which the false gods did not, nor could do, for their worshippers. Remember those things, and you will own that I am God and there is none else'. (b) To the sacred prophecy. He is God alone, for it is He only that declares the end from the beginning'.

(Matthew Henry, '*Commentary on the Whole Bible*', comment on Isa. 46. 9-10).

(iii) Go on, smile.

Two 'semi-humorous' anecdotes with a serious twist:

1. 'A Christian family was having its devotional time, a part of which was praying for the pressing needs of a missionary they all knew. When the father had said, "Amen", one of his young sons said, "Daddy, if I had your chequebook, I could answer your prayers".

(W. Wiersbe, '*Prayer 101*', page 128.)

2. A man came up to one of the elders after a breaking of bread meeting and growled, 'I didn't get anything out of the worship today'. The elder responded graciously, 'That's alright, we weren't worshipping you'.