

(For Monday, October 16, 2017) Does your pride drown out the sounds of truth?

“Yet neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words was afraid, nor did they tear their garments” (Jer.36:24, ESV)

The reaction of Jehoiakim and his servants to the warnings of Jeremiah are typical of one who has succumbed to vainglorious pride. That kind of pride and true wisdom simply cannot co-exist together. The only justifiable response to a sincere word of warning from another is patient attention. Even if someone does not agree with the warning and wisdom which has come their way, there is truly no down-side to accepting the petition of the messenger. We are almost always free to either accept or reject the counsel of others. Yet, in this case, Jehoiakim treats with utter contempt for Jeremiah’s scroll, relegating it to nothing more than fuel for the fire. And in a few short years, the Kingdom of Judah will become a vassal state, and then been utterly destroyed by the Babylonians.

Have there been times when pride has rendered you completely deaf to the words of true wisdom? And have you learnt from that and amended your manner of life?

(For Tuesday, October 17 , 2017) Are you living into your purpose?

“But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them that those who love your name may exult in you.” (Ps.5:11, ESV)

This Psalm was written about 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus. Yet it encapsulates the chief aim of man, which was so gloriously affirmed in the presence of Our Savior. The Shorter Catechism used by the Presbyterian Church allows that the chief aim of man is to “glorify God and enjoy him forever.” It’s wondrous how these two activities of glorifying Our Lord and rejoicing in his presence in our lives are woven together. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* Aslan in his resurrected form talks about the “Old Magic” which was created at the dawn of time. There is this yearning in the deep caverns of the human heart to know that we are each of us created for a glorious purpose. And for the redeemed, there is an indescribable joy which imbues the human consciousness when we come face-to-face with the fulfillment of that wondrous purpose which is to know God, and to rejoice in our commitment to living for his glory.

Are you taking full advantage of your purpose in this life?

(For Wednesday, October 18, 2017) Are you fruitful for God?

“You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified.” (1Cor.14:17, NIV)

This is the part of the Corinthian Correspondence where the Apostle Paul speaks of the futility of believers speaking in tongues, if there is no one present who can interpret the prayer-language. Paul was often heard talking about the importance of the believers to edify each other. Sometimes we translate the Greek here as to “build each other up.” The truth is, you and I were created by God. But then we were given into each other’s care. And the way God is glorified and his Kingdom built is for us to commit our lives to this incredible civil-engineering project on the Spiritual plane, which involves assisting each other in our growth to maturity in Christ. You and I are the bricks in this wonderful edifice. But the mortar which joins us all together and binds us into an indestructible structure against which even the gates of Hell cannot prevail is the *agape* which we share – that selfless and completely oblation love that prospers the Body of Christ and glorifies his name. In John’s Gospel, when Jesus says that The Father is glorified when we bear much fruit for the Kingdom (Jn.15:8), I don’t think Our Lord is talking about winning many souls to Christ. Rather, God is glorified by the selfless love that you and I share and show on a daily basis. Are you bearing much fruit for the Kingdom?

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(For Thursday, October 519 2017)) Have there been times when you needed to close a door?

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” (Mt.10:34, ESV)

Strangely, during my years at Seminary, on the occasions when I was called home to preach to my sponsoring congregation in the Summer months, I was on the preaching schedule for multiple occasions when I was obliged to preach on this passage from Matthew Chapter 10, and its companion verses in Luke Chapter 14 about the cost of discipleship. The passage is challenging, especially when we contemplate the wonderfully comforting words of John Chapter 14, where Jesus leaves us his peace, a peace that the Apostle Paul assures us passes all understanding (See Jn.14:27; Phil.4:7) Over the years, I have come to believe the limitless peace of God’s Kingdom can only be ours when we are forced to admit the strife and division which are part of taking up the cross of Christian witness. Being a believer means recognizing the absence of a relative, subjective universe. For the follower of Jesus, there are certain foundational confessions which are absolute. And these foundational convictions can never be a matter of personal perspective. This means that from time to time, you and I have to be willing to sever our company from those who would reject the Gospel. There are moments when we are obliged to part company with someone, because of the convictions laid down in our hearts by the “Sword of the Spirit” which is the word of God. (See Eph.6:17) This should be something only undertaken with much charity, and after significant prayer and Spiritual discernment. But the challenging truth is that there are moments in our walk with God when we are obliged to relinquish our peace with the world, so that we can receive the eternal peace of God’s Kingdom. Are you facing one of these moments of decision? If so, please know that there is great, great comfort in earnest prayer!

(For Friday, October 20, 2017)) What pushes your buttons?

“And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.” (MT.10:42, ESV)

This verse has taken on new meaning to me this year. I have recently moved to a new community and taken up the pulpit in a church which has a vibrant ministry providing food assistance, dental care, and medical care to the poor of our community. I have the great privilege of working side-by-side with incredible Saints of God who give tirelessly of their time, talent, and treasure to this outreach ministry. But more than the results of this incredible demonstration of kindness and love, I have been struck by what motivates these wonderful people to do what they can for those among us who are hurting. The truth is, these people are not giving so generously of themselves to this service because they want to “give back,” or “do the right thing.” What motivates these Saints is that they are being faithful to the commandments of the Lord of Love who loved them first and best. This verse from Matthew is often used as an encouragement by various service organizations to provide care for the poor, the destitute, the homeless, and the suffering. And of course we as Christians should be absolutely included in those who provide these services. But as a believer, we should never lose sight of WHY we do these acts of charity and generosity. We love because He loved us first. And in being obedient to his Great Commission and to his New Commandment, we are loving him right back.

Have you thought recently about what the major motivations of your life are? It’s worth thinking about, beloved!

(Rev. James Barnhill blogs at www.1thes511.net)

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