

**(For Monday, October 23, 2017) When was the last time you rode piggy-back?**

*“Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.”*  
(Ps.28:9; ESV)

I love the imagery of this Psalm. The images in my mind are something I have seen in countless church windows. Frequently, one of them contains colored glass with the depiction of the Good Shepherd carrying the lost lamb back to the fold. But the truth is, at some point in our lives we are all of us that little lost lamb. And there are moments – in fact quite a lot of them – when we all need to be carried in this life for a stretch. And the thing is, our God doesn’t have to rely on limited human strength. He can carry his people just as long as is needed, even forever if necessary! The sad thing is that so often, we turn down his offer to lovingly pick us up and carry us through the dry spells in this valley.

Are you in a place where you need God to carry you for a while? He’ll be glad to put you right there on his shoulder, if you’ll only let him!

**(For Tuesday, October 24 , 2017) Are you going somewhere for the wrong reasons?**

*“I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, so that none of the remnant of Judah who have come to live in the land of Egypt shall escape or survive or return to the land of Judah.”* (Jer.44:13-14a, ESV)

There is a bit of an old saw which goes, “You can take the boy out of the country, but you can’t take the country out of the boy.” That’s really a bit of what’s going on here with Judah’s refugees in Egypt. They have escaped the Babylonian invasion by taking refuge in this foreign country to the south, but they’ve actually brought their doom with them. Because they continue to worship the pagan idols which got them into their corrupt, oppressed, pathetic state in the first place. It’s a lesson for all of us. Sometimes, we think that a change of scenery, or a different job, or a new church is going to fix things in our lives. But so often, the things in our lives that need to be changed have nothing to do with our location, or our employer, or the name on the sign outside of the place we worship on Sunday morning. Are you in denial about something that really needs amending in your life? Are you running from something, when instead you should be spending your time in earnest conversation with God about the things in your life that need to be changed?

**(For Wednesday, October 25, 2017) What are you building your life around?**

*“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’”* (1Cor.15:54-55, ESV)

This verse has inspired theologians, scholars, and artists. It should! The greatest weakness of mortal man is...well, our mortality. So, the concept that mortality itself has been redressed - that nothing less than death has been destroyed by the empty tomb of Easter morning – this is the epicenter of the great good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But I believe we Christians miss much of the power in this statement if it is considered from a New Testament perspective alone. Because when Paul wrote these words to the brothers and sisters in Corinth, he was actually quoting ecstatic verses which God had given to the prophets Isaiah and Hosea centuries before the Resurrection. (See Is.25:8, Hos.13:14) Part of the power in the Gospel is the fact that it brings to fruition a hunger for something that man had been feeling for thousands of years – a return to a place of becoming fixtures in God’s eternal place of peace. We are no longer beings who are destined to exist only fleetingly like the grass that withers in the noon-day heat. We are, you and I, destined for eternal glory. Isn’t that something worth building your life around?

[Type here]

**(For Thursday, October 26, 2017) Where have all the gentle men and gentle ladies gone?**

*“He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.” (Mt.12:19,ESV)*

As he often does, especially in Matthew, Jesus is quoting from the Old Testament here. Specifically, Isaiah 42:2. This should have given the believers of Jesus’ day an idea that the coming Messiah was destined to be something other than a great military leader who would drive out the Roman army of occupation, and forcibly restore the fortunes of Israel. Instead, an attentive reading of the prophecies might have brought the Jews of Jesus’ day to an understanding that the promised Son of David who would furnish the people with their deliverance and salvation would be a gentle man of peace and mercy. There is still much need for this understanding today. The air-waves and the blogosphere are full of anger and bitter rebuke from one side or another. But what we really need in our nation, in our culture, and in our religious community is a return to worshiping the Lord of Love whose voice is one of absolute gentleness and perfect peace.

Are you as hungry as I am for a return to this gentle Good Shepherd and his ways of loving mercy?

**(For Friday, October 27, 2017) ) ?**

*“And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” (Mt.12:32, ESV)*

The unforgivable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit has intrigued and puzzled theologians for centuries. But my view of this verse is really quite practical. In his book *The Trivialization of God*, Donald McCullough includes a chapter in which he extols the existence of humble agnostics. His perspective is insightful. Because if someone in their humility takes up the position that they are not yet clear on the existence of a Creator God, that means the person is still searching; open to the idea of the Deity of Created Order. But if a person in their pride scoffs at even the idea that such a God or his Spirit might be abroad in our world, then indeed there is little hope for their redemption.

Isn't that a pretty accurate example of what it means to “blaspheme the Holy Spirit?”

(Rev. James Barnhill blogs at [www.1thes511.net](http://www.1thes511.net))

[Type here]