

(For Monday, October 30, 2017) How's your Spiritual coordination?

"With joy and gladness they [the Bride and her companions] are led along as they enter the palace of the king." (Ps. 45:15, ESV)

From a New Testament perspective, when the bride of the King is described in the Psalter and in other Old Testament passages, many theologians understand this to represent the Body of Christ, that is the Christian Church. And it would be unthinkable for a bride and her companions to be anything but incredibly joyful as she approaches the marriage with her true love. So it should be with Christians as well. If we have come to understand just where you and I are bound, we simply cannot make that journey with any other attitude except that of rejoicing. When someone is lacking in physical coordination, we say "He/she can't walk and chew gum at the same time." How's your Spiritual coordination? Can you walk toward The Kingdom and rejoice at the same time?

(For Tuesday, October 31, 2017-All Hallows Eve)) Are you keeping your eye on the prize?

"Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster.'" (Zech.1:14b-15, ESV)

Mass shootings and terrorist attacks abound. A new natural disaster – perhaps, we are told, exacerbated by man's abuse of nature and the environment – seems to occur each week. War hurls death and destruction daily at countless places around the globe. But we should never lose sight of the prize which is before us, namely the peace that passes all understanding available to all believers in the Kingdom of God. God and his Saints and Angels do not sleep, and He is always "exceedingly jealous" (lovingly protective) of his people and his church. And each new act of hate or violence is being recorded as the clock of judgment tick-tocks toward the hour unknown when Jesus will come back to claim his Kingdom and his subjects for his own. And this is the destiny which awaits all of us, either individually when we go to meet Our Lord, or collectively if we live in this mortal body to see his triumphant return. Tribulations are nothing unexpected. In fact, they are part of Biblical prophecy. The question for the believer is the same one it has always been. With God's help, can you carry your cross through this turbulent world, until the day when you lay it and all your burdens down at the feet of The Lord?

(For Wednesday, Nov.1, 2017)) Do you realize the full extent of what you've inherited?

"And one of the elders said to me, 'Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.'" (Rev.5:5, ESV)

When the call to ordained Christian ministry came, I didn't have a clue how I was going to pay for my education. Ordination to the Priesthood in the Episcopal Church requires a Master of Divinity Degree (MDiv) from an accredited Seminary, and this is usually a minimum of three years in graduate school. It's expensive! But, at just the right time, someone became interested in some marsh-land that I had inherited from my uncle when he died, and the sale of that property was just enough to cover my time at Seminary. The Scroll in Revelation, so reminiscent of the scroll from Ezekiel (See Ez.2:9-3:3)) has all the characteristics of a Will and Testament typical in the law courts of Jesus' day. In effect, God had apparently determined at the beginning of time that his Children would inherit their place with him in the eternal Kingdom of God. But the universe had been waiting for someone who could actually break open the seals of the Will and Testament, so God's children could finally come to realize just what they had inherited. That's what happened in heaven the instant Jesus rose from the grave here on earth! Have you realized the incredible riches which you have inherited as "Children of the Testament"?

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(For Thursday, Nov. 2, 2017) What's your harvest look like?

"As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." (Mt.13:23,ESV)

I find this verse both challenging and comforting. Although as children of the Reformation, we eschew concepts like "Works Salvation," it's good to take stock occasionally of our witness to determine just how much fruit we are bearing for the Kingdom. And if our yield is sparse from time to time, it's always wise to examine the terrain in which we are growing; to make sure that we're not on ground packed-down by the rush of trampling feet (periods when we're too busy with earthly things to take the time needed for God's word to work in our hearts). And we need to ensure that we are not spending too much of our time on rocky terrain (where the worries and cares of this world rob us of our Spiritual rest and peace). And we surely need to keep clear of trying to grow among the weeds and thorns (where the allure of earthly riches hides the beautiful guiding light coming from Our Lord and his Cross). But it's so comforting to know that those who bear fruit for the Kingdom don't always need to win the blue-ribbon of First-Place. Yes, there are times when our yield is a-hundred-fold. But God is just as happy with us when our harvest is less than that, just as long as we're yielding fruit for the Kingdom.

What about you? Are you happy with your crop? Or is a change of terrain in order?

(For Friday, November 3, 2017)) Are you being challenged by discomfort toward Spiritual growth?

"So the servants said to him [the Master], 'Then do you want us to go and gather them [the tares]?' But he [the Master] said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both (the wheat and the tares) grow together until the harvest.'" (Mt.13:28b-30a, ESV)

This passage illustrates a point made by such insightful theologians as the late Leslie Newbigin. It is important for the wheat and the tares to grow together for the crop to be truly ready for harvest. There have been numerous times in the history of our church when Christians found it necessary to "draw apart" because of a difference of viewpoint on theology and convictions. And it is doubtless necessary from time to time for parts of God's children to "walk separately" from others when they find they disagree on bed-rock conviction in the faith. But this should happen only in the rarest and most extreme of conditions, since such schisms invariably cause wounds to appear in the fabric of the Body of Christ. There is a constant temptation to divide ourselves from each other then we feel challenged in our beliefs and understanding. But, it is often these very moments of challenge which God places in our lives to make us into stronger, wiser people of faith, and to become mightier instruments in the building of his Kingdom. These seasons of growth can never happen if we are determined to hold only with those who agree with our points of view. and who never challenge us to think in new ways.

Are you shying away from anything in your life right now that, if faced and prayerfully addressed, could lead you to becoming a stronger Christian?

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