

**The Weekly Word**  
February 25- March 3, 2019

The hours of daylight are getting longer. Spring is on the horizon. Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

**Monday, February 25: Luke 20- Rendering to God and Caesar...**

I don't know if I have ever truly spent time considering Jesus' statement rendering to Caesar and God, so after reading the chapter I returned to verse 25:

*He said to them, "Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."*

Assuming Caesar of Jesus' day is the government of today... I began my thinking. Well, from the context, one way I render to my country/government is my taxes. But what else do I owe my country? I suspect voting is something else I owe my country. Since we are a government of the people, I need to participate in the primary voice of the people: voting. Nothing else comes to mind right now.

Flipping the saying to the second side, what do I need to give to God? Again, from the context, my tithes and offerings. Beyond that a number of things come to mind. Praise, honor and glory. Service. Worship. Using the gifts God has given me to advance His agenda and kingdom. Love.

This is quite a list. One that is easier to write out than to live.

*Lord, I need Your help, Your strength, Your Holy Spirit if I am going to come anywhere near to giving You all You are due. Help me, Lord. Help me. Through Jesus I pray. Amen.*

**Tuesday, February 26: Luke 21- Widow's giving...**

The nameless widow in the opening verses felt like the place to linger this morning. Luke writes, *As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on"* (1-4).

I think it was Bill Hybels who called her the 'gold medal giver of the New Testament.' That certainly is an apt description if giving were considered a competitive sport.

The interesting thing is that Jesus does not disparage all the other givers; he simply offers God's point of view based on an observation.

The rich people were not poor givers. In all likelihood they were giving as prescribed by the Law. Paying the temple tax, giving their tithes, making offerings, whatever, Jesus was observing the rich people giving what was expected. God honors their faithfulness, assuming they were doing it with a cheerful heart.

The stand out was the woman. In terms of amount she gave, next to nothing. Her tiny gift offered very little in terms of supporting the work of the temple. In fact it wouldn't have been missed, if the coins fell to the floor and were lost. However, from the Lord's vantage point, hers was an extraordinary gift. *She out of her poverty put in **all she had to live on**.*

Those words are hard for me to fathom. How could a person do that willingly and joyfully? Love, utter dependence. I don't know her motivation.

Whatever, it was more important for her to give those coins than to keep them.

My giving fits the category of the rich people more so than this widow. Whether I give my tithe or beyond, I still have money left to live on comfortably. Should I feel guilty that I am not as generous as this woman? I don't think that is what Jesus is saying, at least to me at this point in life. It is highly likely that she was on the widow's list for the distribution of food. I don't think Jesus would have me give all my money away only to live on the alms of others. Right now I think Jesus is more pleased that I learn gracious, sacrificial giving as a part of the stewardship of my income and resources.

Maybe there will be another day when I am called to be more like this woman.

One thing is certain; I will never out give God!

*Lord, mold my heart to be more giving and to do so cheerfully honoring You who gave Jesus to me and the world. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, February 27: Luke 22- How petty we can be...**

The chapter opens, *Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching* (1), I love the way Luke interprets for his Gentile audience, the Festival of Unleavened Bread. His simple manner of helping Gentiles understand the Jewish aspect with the familiar name 'the Passover'. This is a simple example of how Luke helps his readers understand a culture different from their own. Luke is a master of putting his Gospel in the language of his readers.

How petty we disciples can be. The Twelve provide a clear mirror into the average human heart and soul. Jesus just concluded transforming the Passover meal into His supper. This is one of the foundational moments of the Gospels. Jesus adds a brief caveat that one of them will betray Him. Their conversation begins to wonder who that might be...

Then in an all too human twist they begin to argue who is the best, the greatest. *A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest* (24). Luke names it a dispute. They were arguing about their greatness... in the face of the Lord's Supper and the betrayal by one of them.

How self focused we can be. How hung up on accolades and personal achievements and pecking order we humans can be. There, in the presence of true greatness, the Twelve argue who of them is the greatest. There, as Jesus explains that he will die, they worry about who of them is on the top of the heap.

We can be so petty, so arrogant, so competitive, so self-aggrandizing. And while this incident is the twelve apostles, it could just as easily be any gathering of people. We (I) think more highly of self than we ought. With Jesus right there I can focus on me...

*Oh, God, forgive me for missing You because I am so focused on me. Forgive me, Lord. Amen.*

### **Thursday, February 28: Luke 23- Sabbath...**

Quite naturally, this chapter tugs at my heart. This is my Savior, my God, my Lord and they are humiliating Him and torturing Him and eventually they kill Him. This is one of the 'crazy precepts' of the Christian faith. My Lord and my God died on a cross. My God died... and the rest of the New Testament says that He died for you and for me!

This chapter routinely tugs at my heart...

Reading this morning, I found myself intrigued by the closing verse. The women have followed the dead body of Jesus at a distance to see where He was buried. After noting the

location, Luke records matter of factually, “*Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment*” (56).

So the person you have followed for 3 years, a man you supported with your own money, a man who taught you about the way of God, is killed by government and Jewish authorities and after preparing some spices you rest on the Sabbath? The resting on the Sabbath surprised me.

So many other options came to my mind as possible ways to spend Saturday:

- You hide for fear of the Jews coming after you.
- You mourn and grieve.
- You meet and discuss with others what in the world just happened How did the beloved Jesus end up crucified by the people?
- You get ready to leave town and resume your former life.
- You plot revenge against the leaders.

But, no, *they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.*

I spent the rest of my time thinking about the physically restoring, mentally recuperating and spiritually re-centering gift of Sabbath.

I have recently read a book that had a section on keeping of the Sabbath. I am thinking that God maybe asking me to make a more concerted effort to make Sabbathing part of my natural weekly rhythm. I will need to talk with the Lord about that some more...

*Lord God, help me to better understand Sabbath. Teach me your ways, Oh Lord. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Friday, March 1: Luke 24- A sovereign divine work...**

The disciples spent 3 years with Jesus. They walked virtually every step with Him. They watched Him die on the cross and be buried. On the third day they witnessed the empty tomb, some talked with Jesus and then Jesus shows up in their midst of their upper room. There *He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have ”* (38-39). After this He even ate with them (42). Still with all this they were clueless. *Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures* (45). Now belief came.

It takes a sovereign divine work of God to open our eyes, heart and mind to the truth of Jesus.

Salvation, believing in Jesus whatever you want to call it is not a human work. It is not something that can happen by our doing, by our hanging around the right people. Oh, it never hurts to hang with other Jesus believers, but only God can open our hearts and minds to belief!

Paul makes this abundantly clear in Ephesians:

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

When we have faith it is because God's grace made it so.

All I can do right now is pause to thank and praise God...

*Lord God, reading this story and then seeing Your truth causes me to fall before You. Your grace has brought me home. Your love has rescued me. Your mercy has washed me clean. All I can do is surrender to You and pledge my life anew to You, which I do in and through Jesus, my Savior.*

*Clean out my ears that I might hear the words and leading of the Holy Spirit as I live for You today. Through Christ I pray. Amen.*

## **Saturday, March 2: Acts 1- The gospel it is not about me...**

The disciples still do not quite get it. They are still thinking that Jesus is going to inaugurate the new kingdom of Israel. *Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (6). I suspect, too, that they are thinking they will have prominent places in this new kingdom.

How often we still get things wrong. My first thoughts go to the prosperity preachers, who misconstrue the Gospel, perverting it to teach that God wants us to be wealthy. Or those who turn the Gospel into some kind of political agenda.

All too often I turn the Gospel into something that benefits me... *Lord, are you... going to restore the kingdom.* Lord, will I have an important role in your kingdom?

*God, forgive me for perverting the Gospel and making it about me. Lord, forgive me for thinking that faith means earthly blessings. Lord, forgive me when I choose not to lay my life at Your feet. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

## **Sunday, March 3, 2019, Sunday Worship**

*If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.*

*If you are reading along with me from the Living Hope website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at [office@LivingHopeCT.org](mailto:office@LivingHopeCT.org).*

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.