

**The Weekly Word**  
August 6-12, 2018

We now enter the first full week of August. May the heat of God's Word, like the heat of summer surround you. Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

**Monday, August 6: Proverbs 29- Care about justice...**

The initial proverb that caught my attention was verse 7: *The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.* I found myself considering how I care for the poor.

First the word 'care' grabbed my attention. The proverb is not about how one thinks about the poor; it is how one cares for the poor. Caring implies action; doing, giving, helping, listening, advocating, befriending, visiting... Can one care for another without some kind of positive action on behalf of the cared for? Looking back to the proverb the righteous *care about justice*. So the caring described is given some specific direction. Can one care about justice for another without some kind of positive action on behalf of the cared for?

All of this is confronting me. I'd like to think I am a generally good guy, if so, where have I cared about justice for the poor? This question stings my heart and soul.

*Father God, are you calling me to DO something? Is there a particular injustice that I should seek to right or people caught by the injustice I should seek to help? Speak, Lord, I believe and hope I am truly listening... through Jesus I pray. Amen.*

There was a second proverb that caught my attention. *Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe* (25). I wonder if the two are connected. If somehow fear of man or the flip side, wanting to look good to a certain group of people, has been a snare in my not doing more to fight injustice.

I don't know. I need more time...

*Speak, Lord, I believe and hope I am truly listening... through Jesus I pray. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 7: Proverbs 30- Money dangers and importance...**

These sayings of Agur have a different feel than other proverbs, yet they too carry a 'punch.' It was the punch of verses 8b-9 that landed on me today. ...*give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.*

What truth is found in the words, *give me neither poverty nor riches*. The author has keen insight into the workings of the average person. Why does he pray so? Because he knows his heart and our hearts. He gives two valid reasons for his prayer.

*Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?'* When people become self-sufficient it is easy to take our eyes off the Lord and His provision thinking we can provide for ourselves. I'm sure my own prayers have changed from the days of scrimping out to pay the bills and now when I have a bit more margin in my finances. There is a not so subtle faith-danger in having plenty of money.

But the opposite is also true as well, as the author reminds us. *Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.* I have never been that destitute. I have never gone hungry. I don't know what I would do. The temptation to steal to eat or feed family must be fierce. The proverb reminds us that stealing, while humanly justifiable, still breaks God's laws and in a community like Israel, that is supposed to care for the poor, *dishonors the name of my God.* The dishonoring seems meant for the thief, but also in a small way reflects on the community that didn't care for the poor person.

Lastly, the entire proverb is built on the truth that our wealth is provided by the Lord. Obviously we are to work for it, many proverbs decry the sluggard, but God is ultimately the One who provides. This tempers life considerably; because it reminds me to be always thankful to the Lord for the money and resources I have received and responsibly use what the Lord has provided.

*Lord, all the provision my family and I have is thanks to Your hand. Keep me mindful of stewarding well what You have provided. I pray this through Christ, my Lord. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, August 8: Proverbs 31- Live for self or for God?...**

Usually my attention is directed toward the closing thoughts in Proverb 31 on the noble woman. How incredibly industrious this woman is!

This morning I purposely paid attention to the opening, the sayings to King Lemuel, whoever he might be.

My summary, don't waste your life on women or drink (verses 1-7) as king you are the voice of those who can't speak for themselves. *Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy (8-9).*

I have become a fan of the TV series The Crown. In this portrayal of Queen Elizabeth, I have been struck by the serious approach she, as a young woman, takes when it comes to her queenly responsibilities. The contrast between the how Queen Elizabeth manages her life and her younger sister Margaret is striking... it is a picture of verse 1-7 and 8-9. Another aspect that stuck me is how much Elizabeth must sacrifice to be an able queen, executing her duties with honor and dignity.

These thoughts cause me to realize that to *Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy* has costs—even significant personal and family costs.

The path God calls us to walk, whether king, or noble, or commoner, has costs. Certainly there are wonderful rewards and blessings for walking as God would desire us to walk. Still there are costs and sacrifices to live differently that people expect or desire you to live. Every day is a struggle to live unto the Lord rather than live unto self... this is where my thoughts go as I apply this word to a king to my regular-people life.

*Lord, 12-14 hours remain for me before I close my eyes in sleep tonight. I attune my ears to listen for Your voice... lead and guide me today, and then the next and the next until You close my eyes in eternal rest.*

*I am Yours, Oh Lord, I am Yours. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

### **Thursday, August 9: Acts 1- Unsung Hereos...**

With the death of Judas, the apostles seek to fill his position. Two names are put forward, *Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias (23).* Neither of these men are

named before or after. Both are acknowledged as men who had been with those traveling with Jesus since his baptism (see 21-22).

First I began to wonder how many others had been with Jesus during all his ministry years. We know from the Gospels that some women were among the number who traveled with Jesus.

Next I began to think how Justus and Matthias are unsung heroes. Matthias gets a little credibility being chosen as the 12<sup>th</sup> apostle. However, Justus gets nothing, a named footnote on the pages of the Bible.

Justus is truly an unsung hero. He followed Jesus, gaining nothing except the honor of being among the earliest Jesus followers.

My thoughts spun to wondering about the billions of unsung heroes who follow Jesus for the joy of following Jesus, for the delight of being called a child of God.

I am one of the billions of unsung Jesus followers and most likely so is everyone who reads this blog. I don't follow Jesus for fame or glory. I don't follow Jesus to get my name in print. I follow Jesus because the God of the universe loves me and sent His One and Only Son to die so that I, and all who believe, can be restored into relationship with the Living God. And that is enough for me.

*Thank You, Father, for loving me and Your world. Thank You, Jesus, for dying for me and for Your world. Thank You, Holy Spirit, for imprinting the truth of the Father's love and Jesus' sacrifice upon my heart, mind and soul. Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, Oh my God. Halleluiah. Amen.*

### **Friday, August 10: Acts 2- Do I ridicule?...**

Pentecost is a miraculous day. From the tongues of fire and speaking in multi-languages to 3000 believing the message of Jesus because of Peter's explanation the hand of God was powerfully active. And yet in the midst of the mind-boggling day there is a line in Luke's retelling that puzzles me. Verse 13: *Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."*

Were these scoffers deaf to what was happening? Did they speak languages that were not being spoken in the tongues so all they heard was babbling? Were their hearts so cold that they couldn't accept a visible display of God? I wonder...

As humans we often make fun of what we do not understand. Instead of trying to understand or making inquiries to gain explanations many of us resort to mockery, making fun of things beyond our comfort zone. It is a cruel human trait. In school jocks make fun of nerds. Even the terms 'jocks' and 'nerds' carry a negative connotations. People of varying heritages and races make fun of others from different heritages and races. We pick on accents, bodily features, and mannerisms. We humans can be cruel.

The 'some' who were making fun must have been prominently located or a significant number because Peter addresses them within his first two sentences. *Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! (14-15).*

As I sit and imagine the scene –admittedly from the point of view of a Believer rather than scoffer –my heart is cut at the ease with which we humans can make fun of others. To cut people down on a morning, clearly orchestrated to unite people, stuns me. Consider the magnitude of connections God arranged to have all those people hear the wonders of God spoken in their native languages. There is something special about being spoken to in our first language, it creates a bond. Having traveled in a number of parts of the world, when I am in a country with a

different language and I hear English, I am immediately drawn. My heart relaxes, I feel included. And when I attempt to speak in the language of a country I am visiting, even poorly articulating my greeting in their native tongue generally brings a smile to faces. There is something to being spoken to in one's first language.

Here on Pentecost, God does an extraordinary miracle to include people. Yet even in the midst of this wonder, some scoffed and ridiculed and made fun....

This shows me how easily it is to fall into this behavior. At this point the voice of God rattles my inner space. Do I do this? Do I make fun of people who are different? Do I allow my personal unease with differences, whatever they may be, drive me to make fun of people rather than become interested in learning, growing and connecting with them?

If I am going to be an ambassador of Jesus then I need to seek connection rather than distance. I need to seek communication rather than ridicule.

*Oh, God, forgive me for my times of inhumanity toward others. Send Your Holy Spirit to me again and again so that I might grow to be more and more like Jesus, my Savior and my Lord. In His name I pray. Amen.*

### **Saturday, August 11: Acts 3- Many names and titles of Jesus...**

Not long ago I preached from this chapter, so when it turned up in my devotional Bible reading schedule, I wondered how the Lord might speak to me this morning. It didn't take long. My heart and thoughts were attracted to the various names and titles that Jesus sprinkled in this chapter.\*

Here are the names and titles I found in the chapter.

- Jesus Christ of Nazareth (6).
- God's servant (13).
- The Holy and Righteous One (14).
- Author of life (15).
- God's Messiah (18 & 20).
- A prophet like Moses (22).

Jesus Christ of Nazareth: Jesus is a historical person placed in history with a known birth location. Jesus is not just some 'idea.' He is a person people knew, heard of and could serve and worship. Christ is the Greek word for Messiah, not Jesus' last name. More about Messiah below.

God's servant: first this title echoes Isaiah's suffering servant in Isaiah 53. Jesus suffered and died for you and for me and for the world that we might be freed from the tangles of sin and shame, redeemed and brought into the kingdom of God. Servant also conjures thoughts of serving, doing the bidding of another, in this case God the Father.

Holy and Righteous One: the NIV, along with all the modern translations I checked, capitalized this name, suggesting it is a title. The Holy One... perfect, set apart for God's work and honor, set apart by God for work and honor. Righteous One... perfect, pure, able to move into God's presence. This is a title of honor, dignity and godliness.

Author of life: this title suggests divinity. Who but God authors life. Creator, yes even Sustainer.

The accumulation of titles in this chapter is wonderfully amazing! I grow in reverence for Jesus.

God's Messiah: again Messiah is capitalized in its two uses, suggesting title. Messiah... God's sent One. God's redeeming One. God's anointed One. Jesus is THE One sent by God to call and redeem a people set apart for God.

A prophet like Moses: there is only one Moses, the greatest Old Testament figure. Moses was a prophet who spoke directly with God and who led God's people to freedom. Moses, unique among the prophets, was both prophet –mouthpiece for God –and leader sent by God to execute God's redemption for the people. So, too, Jesus, who has the additional qualities of being Messiah and God Himself.

Wow, what a glimpse of Jesus this chapter provides.

I sit in awe and wonder... Jesus has made Himself known to me. Jesus has called me and Jesus has given me His name and appointed me to be His ambassador to the nations.

*Oh Jesus, Lord and Master. I bow to You. Yes, I bow to You... Halleluiah. Amen.*

\*It is fascinating for me that none of this emerged in my preaching of this chapter. There is so much in God's Word, far more than can be meditated upon or preached upon in any given day.

### **Sunday, August 12, 2018, 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 PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at [office@pcogonline.org](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

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