

**The Weekly Word**  
December 24-30, 2018

Happy Christmas week. It was interesting reading The Passion narratives the week we celebrate Christmas. Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

**Monday, December 24: Matthew 24- Keep watch, be ready ...**

No one knows when the end will come or when his/her end last day will be. At various times most of us wonder about these things. Would it be good to know? I am not sure. I might grow far more anxious as the day nears and stop living. I can imagine all kinds of reactions.

Jesus was teaching about the end of times and he said no one knows when that day will be. Then he gave us some counsel on how to be living in light of the end whenever it might be.

*Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. .... So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.* (42, 44)

Keep watch, be ready... How do I do that, I wondered?

Jesus was way ahead of my questions. He continued, *“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns* (45-46).

His advice: Be about God’s business. If we are doing God’s business as a faithful servant and God returns, GREAT, we are found at our post. And that is just what the Lord desires.

I will never know when Jesus will return. Don’t fret about it, is my take away. Just keep living as the Lord would want me to live and when He comes back all will be well with me.

Ok, then off to work for Jesus...

*Lord, thank You for this reminder. Don’t worry about tomorrow, just keep living and serving You. Amen, Lord, Amen! I pray for energy and strength to keep on loving You and loving others. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

**Tuesday, December 25: Matthew 25- According to our ability...**

Jesus continues His teaching about the end. In the second illustration, the one with the bags of gold given to servants, I was drawn to a descriptive phrase in verse 15. *To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability* (15a).

It struck me that God gives responsibility according to our ability. Add to this, that elsewhere in Scripture we learn that God gives us our abilities in the first place when He created us.

I allowed this sink in for a bit.

God’s plan for me and God’s ‘asks’ of me fit me. And the same is true for everyone.

It is not that God’s ‘asks’ of us won’t stretch us. I know they will. But they are tailored with us in mind. We have been given everything we need to accomplish the things God asks of us.

The servant who received one bag of gold was not asked to do something beyond his ability. He simply choose not to employ the gifts and abilities God had given him, thus he was labeled lazy (26).

I find my heart comforted and encouraged by this thought. When I feel overwhelmed by the ‘asks’ of God, I can now take comfort that the Lord has prepared me for those ‘asks’ by giving me the abilities needed to do all that He asks of me.

*I really am Yours, Lord. You know me inside out. I bow to Your will and I pray for the heart of a beloved son who says ‘Yes’ when the Father asks something of me and then I set myself to doing Your will ASAP. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, December 26: Matthew 26- Boasts, failure and forgiveness...**

As I pondered this chapter, I found myself tracking with Peter. Peter seems to be one of those persons who says whatever he thinks. He’s also a person who thinks he can deliver more than he is able. This is certainly what happens in today’s chapter.

After Jesus explains that all the apostles will fall away (31). Peter boasts, *Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will* (33).

Sadly, as the story unfolds, Peter was more bluster than commitment because a servant girl, and then a few nameless people, cause Peter to deny he ever knew Jesus.

The account goes like this *Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said. But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said. Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.” He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!” After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.” Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!” Immediately a rooster crowed* (69-74).

At this point Peter remembers *the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly* (75)

It is a sad picture of an up till then great apostle.

Maybe sadder still is that I can relate to Peter’s story. I, too, have let my Savior down. Even as I am writing these words specific events are replaying in my mind. I have made faith statements that I have failed to keep. I have been reduced to blathering at the questioning of others. I have been Peter!

Maybe that is precisely why God put this story in the Bible, so that I, and all who read it, know that even the greats of the faith have failed and God will not discard one of His own because of failure!

Later on we know that Jesus reached out to and forgave Peter. Jesus meets Peter and the others on the Mount of Olives. All the scattered and fallen are restored (28:10, 16-20).

*Yeah, God, I need to hear this! Your arms are open, You loved the apostles and You love prodigal me!*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me bless Your holy Name! Amen.*

### **Thursday, December 27: Matthew 27- Reveling in Jesus...**

It feels strange two days after Christmas reading about Jesus’ death on a cross. And yet, at the same time, there is something that feels right about it, as if the whole story is seen in one panoramic picture... incarnation through atonement.

I have recently become a granddad. I am amazed how much the birth of my granddaughter has captivated me. We receive a daily picture and I look forward to that picture every day. She is

a delight. I only wish she and her family lived closer so I could have a more personal relationship with her and them.

Sometimes I find myself wondering what she will be like as she grows. Right now everything is a delight, still I know there will be times when she exerts her own will and ideas. My wife, who is a therapist, deals weekly with children suffering from anxiety, depression, etc. etc. etc. Someday my granddaughter could have to deal with maladies like that. Someday she might go through a rebellious time. Some days she may not seem so 'cute.' I am not wishing this on her or any child, but we just don't know what her days will bring. One thing I do know, I will love her each and every day.

When Mary and Joseph held baby Jesus they had no idea what life would bring. They had no clue about the miracles He would do and the death He would die. Certainly from the angelic interventions they knew God was up to something. But what God was doing and the plan God was instituting could not have been fathomed as they held and nursed their beautiful newborn son.

Even the disciples who knew Jesus as an adult and miracle worker had no clue about how He would die... even though Jesus prepared them and told them multiple times.

Reading Jesus' end so close to celebrating His birth has been inspiring for me. All that Jesus gave up to save me and all His followers blows me away. I sit this morning reveling in Jesus, my Lord and my God.,

*Thank You, Jesus. Thank You, Jesus is the cry of my heart. Amen.*

### **Friday, December 28: Matthew 28- He is not here, he has risen...**

The words that changed human history are in this chapter. The angel of the Lord referring to crucified and buried Jesus, *He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay* (6).

The natural cycle of life has been altered forever. Death is defeated. A new reality has begun with Jesus as the 'first fruit' and believers in Jesus 'the crop'!

Throughout the Gospel, Jesus was constantly telling His disciples that He would die and rise again. Thus the words, *just as he said*. Jesus was bold in His assertion that He would rise from the dead following His torture and death. And so it happened.

The angel giving the women a moment to process what they were witnessing invites them to inspect the tomb, just to be certain. This small detail is filled with the kindness of God. Check it out, see for yourself. What the angel says is true. This is no slight of hand, no trickery. God has raised Jesus! God has vindicated everything Jesus said and did.

Death is defeated. Years later Paul writes, "*Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*" *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ* (1Corinthians 15:55-57).

As I ponder this old story, I realize I can live differently because of Jesus. I can live for God according to His way and by His power because death has no hold on me. And as a son of God, through faith in Jesus, I should not and must not allow the world to have a hold on me. I am Jesus' and like Him, I will rise again someday at his beckoning.

*Lord, my heart sings. Thanks be to God! Lord, I am still a frail human being, help me to live like a child of God and an heir with Jesus. In His name I pray. Amen.*

### **Saturday, December 29: Hebrews 1- Jesus...**

In a few words the writer of Hebrews explains the divinity of the Son, Jesus. *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. ... (3a).*

*Radiance of God's glory...* those 4 words captivate me, particularly the word 'radiance'. My mind whirls to radiant things. The sun is so brilliant, even all that distance from the earth, that to look at it directly would burn our eyes. The indiscernible Shekinah glory of the Old Testament that filled the temple, so radiant that no one could enter at first. Or Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration who's shining body could not really be described by Peter, James and John. Jesus is the radiance of God's glory, which fills the earth.

*The exact representation of his being...* There is no disputing it. Jesus is God, the exact representation of God's being. Exact... identical, perfect such is Jesus, God incarnate human flesh for a while and now seated in heaven from where he came.

*Sustaining all things by his powerful word...* The Son, Jesus, is not some bystander watching as things happen. NO, He is sustaining all things, not some things or most things, ALL things. And He does this by His Word. Sustaining all things requires no strain, no effort only His Word. What a picture of absolute power. And such is Jesus.

Having just concluded Matthew's Gospel, today's reading is a fitting reminder of who Jesus really is!!!!

*Praise Jesus from whom blessing flow. Praise Jesus who saves, redeems, restores and sustains. Praise Jesus, my Lord and my God. Amen and amen.*

## **Sunday, December 30, 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 Living Hope Community Church 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.