

The Weekly Word

May 6-12, 2019

Oh Happy Day. Oh Happy Day as I read God's Word. Yes, read God's Word. Oh Happy Day.... Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, May 6: Zechariah 10- Whom do I trust?...

The chapter opens with a comparison between the Lord and idols who speak deceitfully. Verses 1-2: *Ask the LORD for rain in the springtime; it is the LORD who sends the thunderstorms. He gives showers of rain to all people, and plants of the field to everyone. The idols speak deceitfully, diviners see visions that lie; they tell dreams that are false, they give comfort in vain. Therefore the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd.*

The comparison that Zechariah made launched me into thought about who I follow and who I call out to. Israel was calling out to the wrong protectors. She was reaching to idols and false gods and putting her trust in them rather than the Lord. So, I began asking myself a series of questions about who ultimately do I trust and follow.

Is my faith in myself or in the Lord?

Is my trust in my financial planner or in God Almighty?

Is my trust in denominational leadership or Jesus as head of the church?

Is my faith in my doctors or in God?

And so my questioning went.

I find it interesting that with my list the alternatives to the Lord are not bad or evil. In fact for me I have Christian brothers as my doctor, denominational leaders and even my financial planner. What I need to be wary of is that I put more faith in these brothers more than I do the Lord.

For me, these questions drive me to consider where my ultimate trust lies... I believe it is with the Lord. Still I have to regularly ask myself tough questions to keep on track and not slide off the straight and narrow way of Jesus.

Jesus, I hold my hand out to You. Take my hand and lead me through my journey in life. I pray this in Your name Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday, May 7: Zechariah 11- Do I have a price?...

In the middle of this chapter comes a few verses that sadly tie in with Jesus' passion...

I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the LORD (12-13).

Judas received 30 pieces of silver to hand Jesus over. He later threw them back to the priests... Sad. Very sad.

It has been said that everyone has a price. I don't know if I have a 'price.' There are some things for which I cannot imagine a price. Thankfully I have never been tested and I pray I never will. This said, people throughout history have been tempted and tried with excruciating

decisions pressuring to get them to deny and abandon Jesus. The ones who did not succumb sometimes ended up being called martyrs because they ended up paying with their lives rather than turn away from Jesus. These women and men are heroes of the faith. They refused to turn from Jesus. History tells us that most of the apostles paid with their lives. And the parade of martyrs has continued. Statistics tell us that the 20th century saw more martyrs for the cause of Jesus than any prior century.

I have never faced anything remotely close to the possibility of martyrdom, and I am certainly not asking God for that honor. But my faith is strengthened when I hear and read about women and men who refused to cave when persecution is turned up...

Lord, I pray that I stay close to Jesus. And whatever Your hand, oh God, allows to come my way, I pray that I am close enough to Jesus to continue to run the race well in His name. So, Lord God, I pray for strength, perseverance, courage, and fortitude to stay close to Jesus and live for Him. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, May 8: Zechariah 12- God is at work...

God is at work, working His will on behalf of His people...

From verse 3: *On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations...* Then later in verse 10: *And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication...*

God is at work on the world scene watching over Jerusalem, His city, His beloved. And God is working within His people prepping them with grace and a need for Him exercised in prayer.

God is working all the angles. God is working within and upon Jerusalem. God is working internally within His people even as He is working on the external world situation that affects His people.

What God did for His first covenant people He does for His New Covenant people... for you and me who follow Jesus today.

God is at work...

God is at work in my life and yours, calling us and enabling us to climb to heights of greater maturity in Christ. God is also at work aligning external forces, forging important relationships and creating situations and scenarios that will bring His will for us and His will for humanity to fruition. My call, your call, is to walk in the way of Jesus and to keep our lives hooked to the work of God in us and around us.

Oh, Lord, may it be so... may I remain open to Your work within me and around me. May I seek Your guiding hand and leading voice. And may I follow where You lead, not straying to the right or to the left. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, May 9: Zechariah 13- Cleansed by His blood...

I was not immediately drawn to any verse. In fact I read the chapter twice and then set it aside for a bit before I returned to meditate. When I picked it up again, verse one was where I decided to meditate.

On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.

The idea that drew me was a fountain cleansing from sin and impurity.

My first thought was the old song, *There is a fountain filled with blood*, that opens like this**:

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains...

Jesus is the cleansing fountain that has removed our sin and impurity.

Where would I be without the cleansing provided by the sacrifice of Jesus? I would be stained by my sin and incapable of being in fellowship with God Almighty. Thankfully, Jesus has come and Jesus has paid the price and washed me clean.

My next thought came from Psalm 51:1-2, 7: *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ...Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.* Again, the imagery may be different, but the reality is found in Jesus who provided the cleansing agent on the cross...

So I sat for the remainder of my time contemplating the cross of my Savior, Jesus and the gifts and blessing it provides for all those who believe in Him.

Halleluiah, what a Savior. Halleluiah, what a friend. Jesus, thank You for the cross and the gift of forgiveness, redemption, mercy and grace it provided for me and for the world, particularly those who believe. In Your name, Jesus, I pray. Amen.

**The imagery of the song is a tad of gruesome. It is not a song I would sing in worship because of its imagery particularly when children are in worship. Till 12 or so children have concrete thoughts and the picture portrayed is not something I would actually want them picturing.

Friday, May 10: Zechariah 14- Holy to the Lord...

I found myself thinking about the phrase "HOLY TO THE LORD" from verse 20. It is used to describes bells on horses and cooking pots, ordinary stuff of life. The verse goes on to say that these ordinary items *will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar*. In other words they will be like items dedicated solely to the worship of God, items used in the sacred temple worship of Yahweh.

As I thought about what God was saying I thought that one aspect of the phrase is that HOLY TO THE LORD could be described as WHOLE-LY TO THE LORD. EVERYTHING, their whole or entire existence is dedicated to and in service of the Lord.

Clearly God is describing a new way when everything, even the ordinary things of life, is 100% to the Lord. What a day that will be... the world and everything in it will be HOLY TO THE LORD.

Even though it moves beyond the actual text, I found myself contemplating what it would be like being a person who is HOLY or WHOLE-LY TO THE LORD... Honestly, if horse bells can be HOLY TO THE LORD then the people of the land must be HOLY TO THE LORD as well, right? So what will it be like to live holy (whole-ly) to God. Well, it would have to be a world where temptations and evil are no more, where the earth is full of people who ALL are living holy (whole-ly) to the Lord. I imagine that it will be a world where God is actually in our midst, something like Adam and Eve's time when they could walk in the cool of the evening with the Lord. How amazing that will be.

Internally I would no longer have a divided heart. I would be all in for the Lord and the people around me will be likewise, all in for the Lord and everyone will be encouraging everyone to be all in for God. The Fruit of the Spirit would abound in everyone... Wonderful... so wonderful I am struggling imagining what it would really be like.

God will bring that day in His time and I look forward to that day. How wonderful it will be.
Lord, bring it. Lord, bring Your day! I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, May 11: Malachi 1- Great is the Lord and everyone knows it...

Verse 5 struck me so I decided to return to linger there...

To catch a glimmer of the context I included verses 2-4 as well. The particular words from verse 5 that sparked my meditations are bolded below:

"I have loved you," says the LORD.

"But you ask, 'How have you loved us?"

' "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his hill country into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals."

*Edom may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins." But this is what the LORD Almighty says: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the LORD. You will see it with your own eyes and say, '**Great is the LORD—even beyond the borders of Israel!**'"*

It is one thing for religious group to venerate their god or gods as great and wonderful. But the Lord says that even beyond the borders of Israel He will be honored! In other words, people beyond His people will realize that the Lord is Great. This is an incredibly bold statement!

But this is precisely what I believe. I believe that the Lord is the great God who created all things. I believe that someday every knee will bow to the Lord; EVERY KNEE! Yes, **Great is the Lord!**

Next my thoughts shifted to verse 4, which says that Edom will be crushed and even if they rebuild God will demolish them again. How very true that is. Edom would have been the land around Petra in the rocks of Southern Jordan. It appears that Petra was a grand civilization at one point in history. But once it was destroyed it never again rose to any kind of prominence. I did a Google maps search of Southern Jordan and it is nothing but barren desert today. However, grand Edom was at one time it is no longer and by all appearances it will never be again.

God's Word is true... yes, it is true!!!

'Great is the LORD—even beyond the borders of Israel!'

Oh, Lord God, I thank and worship You. I praise You for Your greatness. I honor You for Your wonder. Great are You, LORD, and most worthy of praise—even beyond the borders of Israel! Halleluiah. Through Jesus, my Lord's name, I pray. Amen.

Sunday, May 12, 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.

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