

The Weekly Word
April 29-May 5, 2019

It's May... and God's Word is as rich and varied as our gardens beginning to bloom.
Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, April 29: Zechariah 4- Don't despise small beginnings...

Zerubbabel began the re-construction of the temple and Zerubbabel will see it to completion (9). Like every project it began small, -much smaller than the grand Solomonic Temple destroyed by Babylon. Apparently many ridiculed Zerubbabel. Certainly he could have felt the weight of their barbs. God builds Zerubbabel up with the words of verse 10. I was helped by the way Eugene Peterson translated that verse in the Message translation of the Bible: *Does anyone dare despise this day of small beginnings? They'll change their tune when they see Zerubbabel setting the last stone in place!*" (10a).

How often I, and others, make fun of and despise small beginnings. What I miss is the hand of God often working unseen. I think of the earliest Church, 12 apostles and a total of 120 cowering in an upper room for fear of the Jews (Acts 1). Yet, from that mustard seed of a beginning grew the Christian Church of today. Those who despised the early Believers were proved wrong.

God often begins small, so when things blossom and grow, neither humanity in general or a particular person can get the credit... God gets the honor and credit!!!

The real issue is not size, but is God at work?

I am wondering if some of the thoughts and ideas I have for ministry might be the initial seeds of God being planted. They may be seemingly tiny ideas but with God, only He knows where they might go and how they might grow.

Lord, I pray Your blessing upon thoughts I have for ministries. I pray, Lord, that I keep my eyes on You and follow Your lead. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, April 30: Zechariah 5- What here for me?...

I struggled with this chapter. What is in it for me, Lord, I wondered. Where is this vision of a flying scroll or woman in a basket intersect my life???

I wondered. I reread the chapter and wondered some more... and wondered more.

I cannot say that verse 3 leapt off the page into my heart, but I kept coming back to it. Eventually I felt this must be where I should sit and ponder today. *And he said to me, "This is the curse that is going out over the whole land; for according to what it says on one side, every thief will be banished, and according to what it says on the other, everyone who swears falsely will be banished.*

First, I wondered. Do these two indictments represent God judging the people based on only these two sins, or are they representative of God judging the people according to the 10 Commandments, of which these are 2 of the 10? I don't know? Certainly these are not the two worst sins of the 10. Most prevalent? I just have no way of knowing. What I do know is that God is targeting thievery and false witness through Zechariah.

Thievery is committed in the shadows but false witness is done in the open, in courts of law... not sure what to do with this thought.

We can rob other people and according to Malachi we can rob God if we don't give the tithe that is due the Lord. We can bear false witness against neighbors and against the Lord. Possibly God is asking me about how I am treating Him. Possibly God is asking me how I am treating other people in my family, church, world. Possibly God is asking me both.

Honestly, I still remain unsure what God has for me in today's reading.

Still I sit faithfully, trusting God and thanking Him for His Word which is always truth, whether it connects well with my life.

Thank You for Your Word, Lord. Thank You for sending prophets to call Your people back to a deep and abiding faith. Thank You for using Your Word to regularly call me back to a deep and abiding faith in Jesus. In His name I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, May 1: Zechariah 6- an inkling to pray...

Another day and another difficult chapter for me to hear God's voice to me within. One comfort I take is that I pressed into some commentaries on this chapter to help me understand what was happening and they, too, had more questions than answers.

So what did I do? I went back and re-read the chapter listening intently, hoping the Lord would speak to me in His Word. I cannot say that I heard anything. Was the silence on God's part or mine? Was God in His sovereignty choosing not to speak or was there some block in my life keeping me from hearing from the Lord? Again, I have no certainty. Maybe both.

I looked back on more time and I saw in verse 7 that the horses were to, "Go throughout the earth!"

I cannot go throughout the whole earth, I thought, but my prayers can. So I sat and prayed for lands far and near...

I don't recall the last time I prayed for Saudi Arabia and Iran. Today I asked God to bless those countries and regions, to release His Spirit upon them and call those people to Himself. Other countries, Peru and Canada, entered my prayer list for the morning.

I sat for a time that my prayers might spread throughout the earth.

Lord, may Your glory extend around this globe as the waters cover the sea. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Thursday, May 2: Zechariah 7- Justice, mercy & compassion, caring for people in need...

What does the Lord expect of us? Although this question does not show up in the text, it is a question most of us ask from time to time. Kindly the Lord, through His prophet Zechariah, gives an answer. "This is what the LORD Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other' (9-10).

There is a great deal of meat in these few words... and the glistening facets of the diamond reveal four facets of truth.

Administer true justice: God seems to regularly call His people to live justly or, in this case, administer true justice. Not justice for a particular class or sub-group but true justice. I take that in part to mean justice for all. Oh, that we, God's people, would do this. Oh, that I would live this way, offering true justice in my spheres of influence.

Show mercy and compassion to one another: mercy and compassion, great words. Mercy not getting what you deserve. Compassion requires taking in the entire situation, the whole of the story. Offering help when we can alleviate a bad situation.

Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor: not oppressing the 'down and out' or taking advantage of those you can take advantage of because you occupy a higher rung on life's ladder. 'DON'T DO THIS', God shouts! I suspect if we are treating people with true justice and offering mercy and compassion this would never happen. Alas, this seems to be the "don't do" side of the first two directives.

Do not plot evil against each other, like the "don't" above, is the flip side of the first two directives. Plotting evil is not compatible with true justice or compassion and mercy.

Well, these words from the Lord give me MUCH to think about and chew upon... remembering that God's point isn't simply to ponder but to live this way.

I have much to learn and many areas that need maturing...

Oh, God... my sense is that I should be further along in my walk with You than I am. Help me, I pray. Amen.

Friday, May 3: Zechariah 8- Lord Almighty...

Immediately I was stuck by the name, Lord Almighty. I guess I am so used to seeing God be referred to as the Lord that reading Lord Almighty caught my attention. And then the name Lord Almighty is used over and over again, 18 times in this chapter.

I glanced back in Zechariah to see if this is his normal name for God. Zechariah has used it in other chapters but never to the extent it appears in this chapter.

Lord Almighty.

That is a powerful name. Lord (Yahweh) is a valid and often used name for God. Adding Almighty multiplies its strength and power (if one can multiply the strength and power of Yahweh).

Other translations use 'Lord of hosts,' sometime 'Lord of armies.' The name broadcasts God's strength. It communicates that God is mighty in battle for His people.

This God, the Lord Almighty or Lord of hosts stands over creation ready to extend His power on behalf of His people in His time. This is the God I serve and love!

Lord Almighty, I bless and praise You. I glorify and adore You. I am at Your mercy and Your beckon call. Unto You I pledge my fidelity and love. I pray this in the name of Jesus, Your Son and the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Amen.

Saturday, May 4: Zechariah 9- The day of peace for the nations...

I found myself drawn to verse 9-10:

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth (9-10).

Verse 9 is quoted in the Gospel of Matthew at the time of Jesus' triumphal entry.

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfill what

was spoken through the prophet: "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' " The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" (Matthew 21:1-9).

I am a little surprised that verse 10 was not quoted as well, if not at the triumphal entry, at least somewhere else in the NT because it prophecies God (Jesus') reign over all the earth and a coming time of peace when war implements are no longer needed. This sounds a lot like God's kingdom which will be established when Jesus makes His final return after death and all God's enemies are defeated.

It is to God's future peace-filled kingdom that my thoughts and heart ventured as I sat with this verse blazing before me...

Initially I wished that it would happen right away. While I long for that day, I realized that my wish is supremely selfish... I wish for the day of God's coming because I want to be spared the hard work of following Jesus. When Jesus returns, death and evil will be banished and there will be no more mourning or tears or crying or pain (see Rev 21:1-4). Life will be bliss with Father, Jesus and Spirit in the center to be worshipped and praised. That is wonderful, but I had to face the inner truth that I longed for that day because I get tired sometimes of having to contend for the faith. I want faith to become 'sight' so I don't have to work at it; it will come naturally when I am resurrected with a new body and live in a new heaven and earth.

These thoughts pressed me into confession...

Lord, forgive me for wanting the easy way out, for wanting my faith labors to be transformed into easy street, for not recognizing that You have more people that you are calling into Your kingdom and for selfishly thinking 'close the door' so I can enjoy my eternity. Forgive my selfish moment, Lord. Help me grow a more sustaining passion for Your kingdom here and now. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Sunday, May 5, 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.