

Actions, Perspective, and Disposition

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? – Micah 6:8

This is one of those texts that is perhaps so familiar that we are apt to miss the quiet call to introspection. It would be a grand thing if human life and behavior were constants, but even believers have a tendency toward inertia or decline in moral matters. This we know by honest assessment of our own experience as well as by revelation. It therefore behooves us to pause and reflect when the Spirit so succinctly and pointedly declares with such plainness of speech what God requires regarding our comportment...

He has shown us what is good. Good for us as humans. Good to Him as God. Good for our fellow man. The opposite of evil. All of this is packed into the tiny word – good. It logically follows that if we heed the injunction, it will lead to peace, security, joy, and rest.

What doth the LORD require of us? It is fitting to remember that we are subjects, not monarchs; stewards, not masters. We will give an account of ourselves and how we conducted the life we were given. He that gave it has the right to know how we spent it, and He will. We are not our own. This is a happy truth if we do not rise in vain rebellion with the prince of rebels.

Do justly. My actions matter to God. What I do springs from who I am. My actions are the most obvious (albeit, not necessarily the truest) indicator of my inward being. Additionally, He has interwoven humanity such that I am my brothers' keeper. No man lives unto himself. What I do impacts others. I must therefore govern my own actions, for they are the only ones I can control. What I do must be just – equitable, right, and helpful.

Love mercy. This speaks to perspective. God is merciful. Do I love God for Who He is and how He shows Himself? Do I seek with my whole being to be like Him – to love what He loves and hate what He hates. Do I indeed love being gracious when offended and merciful when scorned? Is it a mere duty, or is it a joy? The answers to these difficult questions will tell me how closely I am walking with Him.

Walk humbly. Some are blessed with this wonderful trait, but most of us are very proud. Is humility my disposition? Am I the center of my universe, or are others? And if others, because they must be and should be, or because I genuinely see myself as small? Humility was my Savior's clothing. Should it not be doubly mine? How can I ensure that I do not think of myself more highly than I ought, and deem others better than myself?

Spirit of God, breath fresh upon us – our actions, our perspective, our disposition. Thank you for telling us what is good and what is required of us. Empower and enable us to this end. -- D. Murcek

Pastors Thoughts of the Week

When God Sings

The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17

Supposedly “profound thinkers” have concocted their doctrine of anthropopathism, which briefly stated, strips the Almighty of any emotion. We certainly concur that God is not subject to the whimsical, capricious notions so evident in the pantheon of Greek gods, “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent“ Numbers 23:19. But must we deny the deity of all attributes that He, in all of His divine wisdom, endowed in the sons and daughters of Adam? If so we make the incalculable error that the wicked servant did in thinking Him to be an “austere man”.

Our text clearly militates against that notion. What a wonderful rush of exuberant gladness there is in these words! The very words seem to dance with joy. God’s joy too has a voice and breaks out into singing. For every throb of joy in man’s heart, there is a wave of gladness in God’s. The notes of our praise are at once the echoes and the occasions of His. We are to be glad because He is glad: He is glad because we are so. We sing for joy, and He joys over us with singing because we do.

One might rightly judge our God to be an angry and malevolent being as we consider the stern fulminations of most of Zephaniah’s prophecy. But as the sunlight pierces through the thick and gloomy clouds at the end of a stormy day, so this passage broadcasts a stream of hope at the end of a litany of inevitable judgments. We had no other prospect than “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation” But then the Mighty God appeared in the midst of His people and dispelled the threat of damnation. His delights are in the sons of men: “As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” “He will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy;

Pastor

Faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God Romans 10:17

God's Visitation

Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.

Job 10:12

In Job's account, during his time of extreme loss and suffering, three supposed friends come to him to explain why his trials have come upon him. Job defends himself by explaining that God has given him life and favor and that the Lord's visitation preserves his spirit. The word visitation here has the connotation of oversight or care. In other words, the Lord visits us with the design to preserve our spirits.

When we reflect on our lives, we should see how the truth of this verse has impacted our spiritual life. Our Christian life began when the Lord granted His mercy to us and we received His gift of eternal life. Before that time, the Bible describes us as being *dead in our trespasses and sins but because God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, we were quickened (made alive) by His Spirit*. Like a blind man who receives his sight, we could see spiritual and worldly things clearly as if with new eyes. Our lives acquire a whole new meaning and purpose after the Spirit of God takes up residence within us. With things of our old worldly life passing away, we begin to behold all the new things God will place in our lives. The Lord will show us His favor in many ways with this new life. People who cross our paths and situations that arise are created by an omniscient God who has designed all these things for our growth and edification. Our Father's favor is manifested through His provisional care for our physical needs, answers to prayer, instruction and guidance from His word, and the comforting assurance we enjoy as we fellowship with Him. In His teaching of the Good Shepherd, we see the Lord's self-sacrificing interest in the sheep of His pasture. Calling them each by name the Shepherd, guides, provides, and protects His sheep throughout their lives. Though the Shepherd is always watching over His flock, there will be times when He is especially attentive to that one in immediate need. He seeks to preserve the total well-being of His sheep.

Our kind and loving Lord visits us to preserve our spirit as we journey through life. Though He has promised He will never leave or forsake us, during those times of great trial and affliction He rushes in to exercise His care for us. The Lord who began the good work in us intends to bring it to maturity. Today is another day to experience His love and favor and to be at peace knowing He will visit with His care to preserve our spirit.

J. Ekis

Written by men

*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.
I Thessalonians 2:13*

How often, and more so in our age, do we hear people deride the Bible as just a book “written by men,” implying that upon that premise it should not be believed. It is not out of bounds, however, to ask the question why God would not use men to communicate His word to other men? What natural or spiritual law exists that precludes such communication? Or, what other means or manner of communication would be acceptable to unbelievers such that they would believe it? After all, people over many centuries have read many things written by men and have believed what was written. There really is no logical basis for rejecting the Bible as the word of God simply because men wrote it down. We are not aware of any other creature on earth with the ability to communicate to mankind in such an understandable way except for men. Yet, when men inspired of God communicated as He directed, somehow unbelieving men inconsistently deny its truth.

In our text, the apostle commends the Thessalonians, who were among the early believing Gentiles, for recognizing that the teaching brought by the apostles was in fact not of themselves, but was in truth the word of God. Later in chapter four, Paul accentuates such truth to these early Gentile believers: “For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus” (4:2), and “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord” (4:15). Early in the epistle he commented on the evidence of their faith based on their receipt of the truth: “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.” The key here and in many other confirmatory passages (for example, I Peter 1:11-12; II Peter 1:20-21) is the convincing witness of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who believe. Yet men may choose to believe or reject the inward witness of His Spirit. Let us therefore trust the clear witness of the word and Spirit, and commend the same to others who need to acknowledge the truth.

Pastors Thoughts of the Week

Unworthiness

Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

Ruth 2:10

What manner of grace is this that a Moabite widow, with no credentials to present to recommend the least bit of mercy, should find favor in the eyes of the Judean landowner? After all the Moabites were avowed enemies to their western neighbors. Years of bitter animosity characterized their strained relationship. Moabite history begins with an ethnic joke that goes back to Lot's incestuous relations with his daughters, implying that the similarity in Hebrew between Mo'abi ("Moabite") and me'abi ("from my father") was no coincidence (Gen 19:37). Moabite women led the men of Israel into sin during the exodus (Num 25:1-2) and Solomon into sin as king (1Kgs 11:1, 1Kgs 11:7). The offspring of such unions were barred from entering the assembly of Yahweh even after ten generations, according to Deut 23:3. The Moabite king Balak hired Balaam to curse the Israelites but was foiled by a talking donkey (Num 22-24), and a later Moabite monarch, Eglon, oppressed Israel until he is assassinated by the clever Ehud from the tribe of Benjamin (Judg 3:12-30). And so it is of little wonder that Ruth reacts to the kindness of Boaz with such amazement.

We might well share in her astonishment were it not that all of us who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ had found even greater favor in the eyes of our heavenly Benefactor. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" Col 1:21. Ruth's status was elevated from stranger to fellow citizen by the unmerited favor of a munificent savior. Boaz saw worth and value in a women whose life had been ravaged by the affliction of widowhood and whose penury left her no recourse but to seek a beggar's lot for herself and her impoverished mother-in-law in the gleaning fields of her enemy. He would reward such humility and Ruth's name would be forever enshrined in the annals of Jewish history as the great-grandmother of King David.

Jacob, in similar humility, decried his former life and confessed to God "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant;" Genesis 32:10. Self-abasement must have been hereditary for David admitted, "Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" Having been shown such mercies, David remembered to return the mercy in kind to Mephibosheth, who responded to the benefaction with: "What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?"

By and by, we shall see the king in His glory and bow in flummoxed admiration when we behold our names written in the Lamb's Book of life. In that speechless moment we might consider borrowing the words of the Moabite widow: "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?"

Blessings to all who read,

Pastor

In Due Time

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God; that he may exalt you in due time:

1Peter 5:6

Waiting is something that almost everyone dislikes, yet much of our life is spent waiting for someone or something. When we first entered the world and were dependent on others, we had to wait for certain things to be done for us. Waiting for someone to feed us or change our clothes was just the beginning of a lifetime of waiting. Most of us recall impatiently traveling to a certain destination and annoying our parents with the classic “Are we there yet?” As adults, we wait for elevators, at red lights, and in waiting rooms. As Christians, we are instructed to wait on the Lord to give an answer, provide guidance, or fulfill a promise.

It is glaringly apparent that God operates from a totally different perspective than we can comprehend. He is self-existent and is not controlled by our timeframe. He is from everlasting to everlasting, the Alpha and Omega, and reigns from the realm of eternity. He cares for us by meeting our daily needs while being most concerned for our eternal well-being. Throughout His Word, the Lord instructs us to wait upon Him. We are reminded in Ecclesiastes that there is a time for everything and assured that one day the Lord will make everything beautiful in His time. Though we might not enjoy waiting, the Lord has designed it to conform us to His image. In Isaiah, we are told that those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, and in Psalm 27, we are told to wait on the Lord and be of good courage and He will strengthen our heart. Everyone would love to have their prayers answered immediately, and sometimes that occurs. But waiting upon God to send the answer allows believers to move from anxiously waiting for an answer to learning how to persevere in prayer and ultimately appreciating the secret place of communion with Him as His child. Many saints in the Bible learned to wait for God’s divine intervention. Abraham and Sarah waited years for the promise that Isaac would be born to be fulfilled, and the Israelites waited four centuries before God sent their deliverer Moses. Even when the curse entered the world through Adam’s transgression, God’s promise that a Savior would come to crush the serpent’s head would take several millenniums before coming to fruition.

Today, as followers of the true and living God, we must wait for the total fulfillment of some of His promises. There is coming a time, possibly sooner than we realize, when the Lord will erase the curse in this life and all things will be made new. Until that time comes, we are to *trust in the Lord and lean not unto our own understanding in all our ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct our paths*. Let us humble ourselves under His mighty hand as we remember that He will fulfill His promises...in due time.

J. Ekis

Free course

*Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.
II Thessalonians 3:1-2*

It is notable that in this epistle, which is believed to be among his earliest, that Paul, on behalf of himself, as well as Silas and Timothy, includes this prayer request. While we in our post-Christian culture are sometimes still shocked at the general attitudes towards the gospel, these men were clearly aware of the attitudes of the cultures to which they were sent. The order of the request indicates their priorities. The first is for the word of the Lord to have free course and be glorified. The second is for their own deliverance from unreasonable and wicked men. They had already faced opposition previous to their arrival in Thessalonica, and also there, and had seen the word of the Lord nevertheless have its influence on those who believed in the cities of Macedonia. Therefore, they understood that their first request could still be granted even if the second wasn't. However, the request for deliverance would also meet their practical needs, and allow them more freedom to spread the word.

As we follow this admonition in the ordering of our own prayers, we should understand what we are asking. For the first, what is it that we ask when we ask for the word's free course? The course of a thing refers to its motion, flow, progress, passing, or advancement. Thus, we would desire to see the word of the gospel be able to influence many, in spreading the message abroad, as well as influence individuals deeply, bringing understanding, conviction, and repentance, through the work of the Holy Spirit. The second may be more straightforward – we desire for all who proclaim the gospel to be free from being hindered by men who are generally without faith in the true God of the Bible, and are therefore unreasonable and against the message for themselves and for others. These needs for the ministry of the word of the gospel have not changed since the time of Paul and his companions. Whether in our own land or abroad, let us continue to understand and exercise such requests, and be ready to be useful to the Lord in their fulfillment.

Mediation

Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead; I also am formed out of clay. – Job 33:6

The character of Elihu in the narrative of Job is a bit enigmatic. Some have identified him as but one more of Job's bloviating friends with much to say but no real solutions. Others see in him a type of our Lord Jesus, acting in some sense as mediator between God and Job. There are good arguments for both views, though it is difficult not to see Christ in shadow and type in Elihu's personage. His name means "God is Lord." He claims for himself both inspiration (Job 32:8) and arbitrating authority (33:6). Additionally, Job has no response to him. Elihu's viewpoint of God is lofty, and God Himself speaks directly on the heels of his sermon. Finally, the fact that he is unrebuked by Jehovah like Job's other three friends (Job 42:7-9) seems to indicate that he is aligned with Heaven.

While Elihu may bridge the gap between the human and the divine perspective in the epic of Job's trials, all mankind needs a daysman to make up the distance between our fallen state and God's perfect standard. The chasm between sinful man and a holy God can only be spanned by one who owns both natures in their entirety and perfection. There is, therefore, one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

This office of Mediator that our Lord assumed upon His resurrection is vital to our spiritual perspective and well-being. We must never lose sight of our need for mediation. Our natural state – our inner man, our flesh – is at enmity with our Creator. We will not be completely free from the influence of this scorned overlord until we are glorified, and we are in the ever-present need of our Christ's intercession to keep us sanctified. This He provides via His session as our Great High Priest. Without a Man Who was tempted in all points as we are and yet without sin at the right hand of God, our salvation would rest upon us and would therefore not be eternally secure. Without an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, we would still be fully subject to the power of sin (1 John 2:1).

Thank God for our Elihu! The second Person of the triune Godhead, our Lord Jesus, is our faithful and solitary Mediator. Let us rejoice that while He did not have to do so, it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in all things pertaining to God. And because of this, on that awful day when we stand trembling before the Judge of the Earth, we shall have One Who comes forth on our behalf at the bar of God's eternal justice, showing His nail-pierced hands and claiming us as His own, by Whose mediation we will be permitted to enter into the joy of our Lord.

Hallelujah, what a Savior! -- D. Murcek

Pastors Thoughts of the Week

Pertinacity

Genesis 32:26: And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh.

And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

Jacob was spending a sleepless night contemplating the inevitable outcomes of the next day when he would be confronted by his vengeful brother. Esau had been storing up wrath to avenge the stolen birthright and to wrestle from his conniving brother the inheritance that had been deceptively denied him. Sixty-five years only intensified his desire for revenge as his murderous designs festered in his heart.

Jacob could only elude his adversary for so long. And so on this eve of destruction the Lord meets him at Mahanaim and engages with him in a divine wrestling match affording to him the comfort of certain success on the morrow and to us a sublime lesson on importunity in prayer.

We children of the king are as weak as Jacob and as he "not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed". We are taught here to cling tenaciously to the author and finisher of our faith. When we have spent all our energies and ingenuities and find ourselves enervated to the point of exhaustion, there is nothing left in us but to cling to the power of our omnipotent God. The Lord delights in our resignation. For as surely as we will not let go of Him, so assuredly He will never let go of us.

O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee.

I give thee back the life I owe, that in thine oceans depths its flow.

May richer fuller be.

Let us then take solace in the illustrated truth. No matter the direness of your immediate struggle as Jacob did, so must we take hold of the arm of the Almighty and never let go until the blessing is secured.

Have a blessed week,

Pastor

Faith cometh by hearing: and hearing by the word of God Romans 10:17

Running Well

Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should obey the truth?

Galatians 5:7

The Bible occasionally uses military terms and athletic contests as metaphors to illustrate the believer's resolve to follow Christ. The apostle Paul especially uses this in the epistles. Believers are encouraged to be like good soldiers who will not entangle themselves in this life's affairs. The soldier's equipment and dress needed for battle illustrate the Christian's spiritual accouterments necessary to gain victory against the devil's arsenal. Paul also uses the necessity of the athlete's regimental discipline to win the prize at the end of the race. Today's verse speaks of running well and not allowing anyone to hinder you in the race.

Living out our faith in this world is presented with many hindrances. We are cautioned in the scriptures not to be ignorant of Satan's devices. He has many ways to steer believers off course. Ultimately the blame for being distracted from running lies with the individual. True as that may be, still there are many hindrances. Personal interests, schedules, social demands, and false teachers are just a few. But what mostly gets in the way, as Paul mentions in this verse is people that cut in front of us in our Christian race. For the Galatians, the teachers were saying that keeping the Old Testament law added to faith in Christ was necessary for salvation. These false teachers were persuasive enough to influence the believers at Galatia. Good teachers can even get in the way if we focus more on them than on the Christ they preach. When Cornelius fell at Peter's feet, Peter told him "Stand up; I myself also am a man." Peter then preached Christ to Cornelius and his household. After the conversion of Cornelius, Peter moved on. The Centurion would have to follow the Savior, not Peter. The Apostle Paul also needed to remind the believers at Corinth whom they were to follow. When some seemed to boast that they were followers of Paul, the Apostle corrected them by saying "Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" As godly a man as Paul was, he did not want to cut in front of them and obscure their vision as they pursued Christ.

In the monotony of our daily routine, we are to see ourselves as runners in a race pursuing the finish line where our Savior stands with outstretched and welcoming arms. By the power of the Holy Spirit within us we can be sensitized and alerted to the things that hinder us with the intent that when we complete our race, we can hear the Lord say "Well done!"

J. Ekis

Remedy for legalism

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
Galatians 5:16*

To this point in this epistle, the apostle Paul has spent four and a half chapters condemning the Galatian churches' adoption of the doctrines and practices of the "Judaizers," who had come to them purporting to represent the gospel from the Jerusalem elders. While the chief mark of their false doctrine seemed to be a requirement for Jewish circumcision of the Gentile believers, the detailed argument by the apostle indicates that they were calling them to observe the rites of Old Testament Judaism. This error had been condemned by the apostles at their meeting recorded in Acts 15, where Peter ended the disputing by recounting the clear work of God in bringing salvation to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, "giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." Peter's further rebuke of the "yoke" that the Judaizers attempted to bring upon the Gentiles seems to be echoed by Paul in the first verse of Galatians 5.

While much could be said, and has been said, about this subject of "legalism," both what it is and what it is not, this simple command in our text is the apostle's remedy for dealing with the sins of the flesh, which the yoke of bondage to the law could not solve, because of the weakness of our flesh (Romans 8:3). While he follows this statement with clear delineations of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, these manifest the positive approach that this command conveys. Rather than depending on the weakness of our flesh to resist sin, he says to walk – live and move – in the newness of the Spirit whom we have received, whose fruits negate the works of the flesh. Comparing verses 19-21 with 22-23, we can easily conclude: love will not hate, joy needs no reveling, peace ends strife, longsuffering conquers wrath, gentleness avoids variance, goodness averts lasciviousness, faith opposes idolatry, meekness refuses heresies (schisms), and temperance overcomes adultery, fornication, and drunkenness. He therefore concludes that they that are Christ's, who live (have eternal life) in the Spirit, have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts, by walking in the Spirit. May we be careful to keep the order straight.

Infinitude

Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number. – Job 9:10

Frequent study of and meditation upon the attributes of our God is an extremely profitable spiritual endeavor. The glories and perfections of His eternal Being are enervating to His children. It is striking to observe the interplay of His multitudinous facets and their perfect dovetailing one with another. For the sake of simplifying the equation, consider isolating just two of His marvelous characteristics. The Sunday School child knows that God is both omnipotent and omniscient – both all-powerful and all wise. But these truths are not eternally siloed the one from the other in the divine Being. The wisest sage who has studied God and His Word for decades stands in awe that His power is a knowledgeable might, exercised or restrained in the wisest of manners, while His wisdom is often clearly demonstrated as the outworking of His potency (Rom. 1)! Indeed, it is impossible to understand God with our two-to-three-dimensional thought processes, for everything that He is, He is wholly. We fall down in awe before such a God as this!

This being the case, it is helpful to consider God's infinitude. This attribute of God simply stated for doctrinal purposes means that God is immeasurable in all of His Person and essence. Everything He is, He is limitlessly. This is awful and wonderful at the same time. It is a source of sublime comfort for the redeemed and will ultimately be an unfathomable terror for the lost. Let us meditate for a moment upon the infinitude of the Most High...

God's holiness is infinite. The seraphim cry holy, holy, holy incessantly. God is so pristinely set apart from His creation that the slightest sin is an infinite assault on His nature. He is incalculably offended by each and every thought, word, or deed that springs from the self-deifying nature of fallen men and angels alike. Oh, that we might grasp this truth!

God is measurelessly just. He must punish iniquity. He poured out His wrath in infinite manner upon His only begotten Son at Calvary. The sun refused to shine as He made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. To refuse such a vicarious atonement is to invite indeterminable fury from Him with Whom we have to do.

God is infinitely loving and merciful. With regard to mankind, made in His image and likeness, though slighted by sin, He continues to love the sinner. His patience and longsuffering are exercised in boundless fashion in anticipation of repentance. He is able and willing to save to the uttermost them who will come and partake of His limitless grace. To our friends and family who have to this point refused His overtures of mercy, His hand is outstretched still.

God is limitlessly faithful and true. What He has said, He will do. What He has promised, He will perform. Indeed, the half has not been told us. In the halls of Heaven we will undoubtedly marvel at what we only vaguely grasp now regarding the substance of His promises. When we know as we are known, we will never cease to praise Him for His infinite goodness bestowed upon us eternally through Christ Jesus.

Praise His Name! -- D. Murcek

Pastors Thoughts of the Week

THE HALF WAS NOT TOLD ME

*Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me:
I Kings 10:7*

Doctrinally sound theologians describe the Bible as being a closed canon, meaning that the 66 books of the Bible are all that God has given us, after which he closed the canon with the warning "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." Revelation 22:18-19. The Holy Scripture is so complete that even the words themselves are verbally, plenary inspired. But this staple doctrine does not preclude the fact that God has more to tell us. The Bible is plenary in the sense that it is all that God wants to reveal to us for now. Be assured that there is so much more. It will require eternity to probe the depths and heights of what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

It is certain frail man is unequipped to comprehend the glory that is yet to be manifested. But it also may be that God intends for our faith to be tried by leaving some matters shrouded in mystery. He has shown us enough. Even so esteemed a saint as Moses only saw the "back parts". Having been swept up into the presence of the Almighty, John was forbidden to write the whole vision. Revelation 10:4: And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

Consider Daniel, who is given elite status with Job and Noah (Ezekiel 14:14), who all shared secret conversations with the ineffable God. This godly prophet, to whom so much truth was entrusted, was left with unanswered questions: "And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Daniel 12:8-9.

Our text above are the words of the Queen of Sheba who, as a type of the New Testament believer, makes her expensive and wearisome journey to the heavenly city where she falls at the feet of the son of David who ensconced upon the six-staired throne is able to satisfy her "hard questions". Her eyes convinced her that the fabled wisdom of Solomon and his opulent kingdom was twice beyond what her mind could imagine.

Believers will one day ascend the heavenly staircase to find the Son of David waiting to satisfy our "hard questions". "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold" Job 19:27 "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty" Isaiah 33:17. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Cor. 13:12. What only an infinite mind could create in all splendor and glory will be revealed to us in all of its diffusions. We all in open-faced glory will confess "the half was not told me".

Have a blessed day,

Pastor

Faith cometh by hearing: and hearing by the word of God Romans 10:17

Super Moon

And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

Genesis 1:16

On Monday, August 19, 2024, an occurrence appeared in the nighttime skies known as the Super Moon. This happens during a full moon phase when the moon's monthly orbit is on the opposite side of the earth from the sun. It also coincides with when the moon is closest to Earth. The moon's size will appear larger and its brightness will be greater. As it hangs in the night sky in all of its wonders, a person will witness that the heavens certainly *declare the glory of God!* (Psalm 19:1)

Genesis tells us that the heavenly lights of the night skies are for signs and seasons and as with all creation attest to the magnificence of the Creator. Several things come to mind when pondering the Lesser Light. The architect of the universe has ordained the heavenly bodies to be in defined locations with predictable orbits. The relationship between Earth and the sun is considered the most accurate timepiece. As with God, there is order and balance in His dealings with man applying His truth and justice, mercy, and grace. Just as we can have confidence the sun and moon will rise at their appointed times tomorrow; we can also trust that God will always fulfill His promises. Forever His word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89) and though heaven and earth will pass away, His word will not pass away (Matt. 24:35). The moon also is a great light in the midst of darkness. The full moon that appears in October is known as the Harvest Moon, which was given that name because it enabled farmers to see at night to harvest their crops. The moon's light in the darkness is a reminder that no matter how dark the time a person goes through, Jesus is the light that can show them the way. Even when clouds cover the moon's light, we are confident the moon is still there. Eventually cloud cover will recede and the light guides our steps. Similarly, when our prayers seem ineffective, the Lord will again shine His favor on us if we persevere. *For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee* (Isaiah 54:7). The moon has various phases as it orbits our planet. The New Moon phase hides the moon because it is directly between Earth and the sun. As it travels from that position it will show slivers of itself and increase until reaching its fullness. Then, it will gradually decrease until it disappears from the night, only to show itself again. Jesus' earthly life was very similar. He was born in obscurity in the home of a carpenter where scripture reveals a glimpse of Jesus at 12 years old as He increased in wisdom and stature. He remained in obscurity again until He was baptized at thirty years of age before beginning His mission. His teachings and miracles lifted Him to the peak of popularity until the religious leaders could tolerate Him no more. Eventually, He who raised the dead was Himself condemned to die. As He suffered on the cross, great darkness shrouded Earth as the sun refused to shine. He willingly gave His life for the sins of the world and was buried. His enemies thought they were rid of Him, but as the third day began to dawn, He rose again.

The reality of a living Savior gives hope as we continue in this present moral darkness. At times we may only see a little of Him, while at other times we see Him clearly. Gazing at the Super Moon, we long for the day when the Lord will return in His fullness to guide us into His eternal glorious light where there will be no darkness evermore

J. Ekis

Followers

*Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.
Ephesians 5:1-2*

This exhortation comes in the midst of a long description of what the life of a Christian should exhibit, and not exhibit. These characteristics are not requirements that must be achieved to become a Christian. They are instead the apostle's description of the effect of the transforming power of the Spirit of Christ and of God in the life of one who has surrendered to His saving love. It is that love that makes them dear, that is, beloved, children. The response to such love is to follow Him, who first loved us (I John 4:19). The original word translated "follow" means to imitate. Thus the initial description here of that path is to walk in love – imitating Christ, who loved us to the degree that He gave Himself for us. He did not just give His attention, or His time, or some material item of value, as we might give to someone as a token, although with much sincerity, of human love toward them. He gave *Himself* as an offering and a sacrifice, one that was pleasing to God, in the place of our displeasing and foul lives of sin, to redeem us.

In our recognition of such wondrous love, the exhortations in these chapters describing such an imitating life are not grievous to His dear children (I John 5:3). They are instead the chief desires of grateful hearts. We recognize that, when God so loved the world, He did not simply look down from heaven with warm feelings toward mankind, but much more He gave His only begotten Son to be the savior of the world. As imitators of God, we are exhorted not to just feelings of gratitude toward Him, but to walk in such active love in deed and in truth. One example of such action directly precedes this, in showing kindness and forgiveness toward one another, again imitating His forgiveness toward us. With the teachings of Jesus in the gospel accounts and the expanded applications of them in this and other epistles, we have plenty to imitate in demonstration of loving thankfulness to Him.

An Old Dusty Book

And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

– 2 Chronicles 34:19

The context of our meditation is the rediscovering of the book of the Law during the reign of Josiah. Hilkiah the priest had found this old, dusty thing in the house of the LORD, and he and Shaphan the scribe had quickly presented it to King Josiah who had already been enacting reforms in Judah due to the spiritual devastation of the preceding reigns. Because that “by the law is the knowledge of sin,” Josiah was cut to the heart, and purposed to further align his motives and subsequent reforms with Heaven’s stated perspective.

The astounding circumstance is that while the book was old, it should never have been dusty. Similar to Bibles put on a shelf and never opened, the ruling class of Judah had precipitously lost interest in the revealed will of God over the course of time. It was easier, even for believers, to manage their devotion based on a verbal tradition of God’s will rather than going directly to the source where He precisely revealed it, so much so that the book of the Law actually fell into non-use altogether. As a result, they syncretized their worship of God with outside religious and secular influence, to God’s disgust. It is no wonder the nation spiritually faltered so profoundly.

Today, the church of Jesus Christ is in a similar predicament. The secularization of Western society is all but complete, and its religion of “science” and psychology has been firmly enthroned. The scientists are its priests, “experts” in the new religion of our time. Professing believers are finding it difficult to stand firm. In every type of media available, we are bombarded from this faux-scientific community with fallacious reasoning and unsubstantiated claims acutely aimed at undermining the Word of God. Professing believers are having their faith challenged to the point of wavering, or at least to the point of accommodation. The result is a hybrid religion with vague and fuzzy notions of God and His working, and less conviction of sin because that’s all so “old-fashioned.”

This is happening because so many professing Christians have permitted the old book (the Bible) to become dusty. Instead of assiduously applying themselves to daily study and devotion of the Word of God, they take in bits and pieces, in or out of context, and build their spiritual foundation cafeteria style. Such a sandy foundation cannot withstand the torrent of the world’s budding religion of the Man of Sin. Snippets and soundbites, YouTubes and memes, emails and topical streaming psychological sermons are no replacement for daily reading, study, and prayer. Only by constant reading of this old Book will the Christian be able to stand with heart rent and spirit aligned with Heaven.

Let us resolve that no matter what happens today and every day, we will feed ourselves consistently with the manna of Heaven found between the pages of Genesis and Revelation. Let us take heaping helpings thereof frequently, building ourselves on our most holy faith thereby. And may it never be able to be said of us that we permitted the old Book to get dusty. If we commit ourselves to this, the Spirit will have His way in our lives, and we will be Heaven’s agents in withholding man’s new religion from the fulness of its hellish ends as we occupy until our Lord comes. -- D. Murcek