

The Weekly Word
October 10-16, 2016

As the season and foliage change may we remain steadfast with the Lord. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, October 10: Mark 7- Majoring in the minors...

The Pharisees in the first story of the chapter major in the minors. They get all uptight about eating without washing hands yet gloss over the withholding of money needed to care for their parents. Jesus takes them to task for their behavior.

I wondered about my life. Are there times when I major in the minors? Are there times when I focus on the less significant, even insignificant, issues of faith and life while at the same time missing the call to love others near to the heart of God issues? Only through honest self-examination can I hope to discover if I am acting like a Pharisee.

“Keep short accounts,” God whispers into my thoughts. “Check in regularly with Me, that way correction will be simpler and sin-filled patterns will not have time to become engrained in your life,” continues the Spirit of God.

Lord, I still need to grow in the practice of self-examination. Help me, Jesus, to grow in this practice so that my life will reflect more and more clearly Your life, Jesus, my Lord. This I pray in Your name. Amen.

Tuesday, October 11: Mark 8- Jesus a man who cares...

Devotionally I was drawn to the opening verses of this chapter and the person of Jesus displayed in its words. *During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance”* (1-3).

I tried to step into this account. Here is Jesus, a folk hero for the people. They hang on His every word and hope for a miracle. A huge crowd has gathered to see Jesus, 4000 men, easily 12,000 men, women and children. Most people lived hand to mouth, so missing a meal was significant.

Even though Jesus could easily have slipped into celebrity mode, distant and removed from the people and their plight, He doesn't. Jesus stays connected to the people. So as the daily meal is approaching, Jesus worries not about himself but for the people. His heart breaks and compassion flows out. “What will the people eat?”

I cannot image one celebrity today having this kind of compassion. Performers don't care what sacrifices people have made to be at a concert. No athlete cares about the sacrifices people make to attend their games. And the same could be said for politicians as they look out at their rallies.

Jesus is different than the celebs of today.

Jesus cares... He really and truly cares for the regular person.

This warms my heart...Jesus cares. God cares about the mundane issues of life, about the mundane issues of my life.

What a gift, to be reminded how much the Lord cares.

He cared for the crowd back then and He cares for us today.

Dear God, thank You for this glimpse into Your personality. You care. Jesus cares. The Holy Spirit cares. I am cared for!

I bask in this moment and thought.

Lord, grace me with Your heart. Teach me to care for the everyday person around me. I pray this in Jesus' name and for His honor. Amen.

Wednesday, October 12: Mark 9- ...

I found myself mulling over and chewing on verse 1. *And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."*

This is a curious statement.

It certainly is not referring to Jesus' second coming at the end of days, since that has not happened and the time line for this word is over.

It could refer to the transfiguration which is the next story, but it would be a curious introduction to an event about to happen.

Some have suggest it refers to Pentecost but if so, this verse is the only allusion to Pentecost in Mark's Gospel, so this feels unlikely.

It could refer to Jesus' death on the cross when He defeats Satan inaugurating God's new work and kingdom. This seems more plausible since the account before is about Jesus' death and a bit later in this chapter Jesus again teaches about His death.

For me tying this to the resurrection seems most likely, but I don't know that anyone can be definitive about the precise connection.

What is clear is that God's kingdom has come in power, not necessarily in fullness, but the kingdom has come in power. And this communicated a great deal to me. Living in a time after the death of Jesus' contemporaries, it means that I live in a time when Jesus' kingdom is here with power.

Power to do what? Defeat Satan and all the enemies of God. Save sinners. Bring justice to broken systems. Heal the sick and hurting. Connect people with their God and Creator. Announce the day of the Lord and good news to all.

We, who are alive, live in that day! God's kingdom may not yet have come in fullness, but it is breaking into our dark and hurting world. And we are God's messengers announcing God's good news and as we stay connected to Jesus we can announce it with the power of God.

How can I live into this today? How can you? It is our calling and our opportunity... let's seize the day and bring glory to our God!

Send me out today to announce Your Kingdom. Send me out to witness in word and deed that Your kingdom is present with power. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen

Thursday, October 13: Mark 10- Humbled by Jesus sacrifice...

For the third time Jesus tells his disciples what fate awaits him in Jerusalem. Verses 32-34: *They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn*

him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

With astonishing detail Jesus explains His impending death. I realize that Jesus was simply trying to prepare His disciples for the events to come, to give them heart amidst the emotional upheaval that they would certainly encounter.

But where my thoughts went was to Jesus who had lived with the vivid understanding of what will happen to Him in the days to come.

How horrible and difficult that must have been to know the gruesome ordeal that He had to endure. The events of His execution are horrific enough, but to know them in detail before they happen make them even worse in my book.

Knowing what was coming, Jesus still continued to live for other people, to tell the way of salvation, to heal and help the hurting and sick. Knowing the horrific future never disrupted his day to day work and care for people.

I am more humbled by Jesus' sacrifice, having considered these words. He knew and still He gave. He knew and still He marched on to His death so that all who believe could live.

O what a savior! O what a Lord!

O sacred head now wounded with grief and scorn to bear... mine, mine was the transgression and yours the grief and pain.

Thank You, Lord Jesus, for going through with the cross, dying so that I might live.

I thank You. I live for You. Halleluiah, what a Savior. Halleluiah, what a Lord!!!

Friday, October 14: Mark 11- Authority we have in Christ...

I was fascinated by Jesus' exchange with the authorities regarding authority.

They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?” Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!” They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ ...” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things” (27-33).

On the surface Jesus gives a cleaver response without divulging the authority He has. But my thoughts went beyond the conversation to thoughts about authority.

Clearly the issue of Jesus' authority was important to the Jewish leaders. However, I am wondering what kind of response the Jewish leaders were anticipating?

Their actions to date would suggest that if Jesus told them His authority was from God, the Father, they would not have believed Him. I am assuming that if the Jewish ruling council gave Jesus His authority, they would know that. So were they thinking He might say the Roman governor was His authority? Was the question purely a ruse? I just don't know.

Whether the Jewish leaders understood it or not, authority is an important concern in the spiritual world. In Matthew 28 Jesus says that he has “all authority.” And as Jesus' disciples, understanding our authority in Jesus is an important concept in the Christian faith.

Knowing our authority in Christ allows us to prevail when the forces of evil assail us.

Do you understand the authority Jesus has imparted to us? If so, are you living into it? If not drop me an email and I can help you.

Lord, thank you for the authority Jesus has given us as His followers. Help me to live into my authority so that Your kingdom can advance and people will know that Jesus is Lord! Amen.

Saturday, October 15: Mark 12- A call to self-examination...

As a religious leader, verses 38-40 directly connect to my life and occupation. Jesus spoke forcefully to His followers. *As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely."*

His message is pretty clear. Religious leaders, beware power, prestige, being placed on a pedestal, and honor. And do not take advantage of your position for personal gain.

When you help people, when you teach as one teaching on behalf of God, it is not for show or personal gain. By implication it is for the Lord. Personal gain is not to be part of your equation.

It is all too easy for revered or talented clergy to begin to be seduce by their own 'press notices' and the accolades of the people.

The role of the religious leader is to listen to the Lord and act accordingly. This will not always play well with the masses.

John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Twelve were all persecuted for things that they said and did... things that honored God but angered people.

The second to last sentences is a sad commentary on religious leaders and it should not be. Jesus' final comment is a dire warning to religious leaders who are in it for personal gain or fame!

As a religious leader I sit up and take notice... Jesus expects His followers to guard their hearts and see that their actions and their character honors Jesus, the Father and the Spirit.

This calls me to examine my life, actions and motives...

Search me, Oh God, and see if there is any wicked way in me. And where you find some, purge them and clean them from me. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Sunday, October 16, 2016, 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.

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