

The Weekly Word

March 6-12, 2017

The days are growing longer, spring is nearing. As new life comes to the earth after winter's slumber, may new life come into our lives as God's Word springs forth this week. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, March 6: 2Peter 2- False voices...

Peter spends the entire chapter, about one-third of his letter, warning people about false teachers. People who *secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them* (1).

Truth is important. Right living is the goal, but truth is important.

Truth is like the foundation of a building. It is the anchor and support for the building. If the foundation is compromised, the entire structure is in trouble. It may stand for a while but over time it will falter and be condemned.

So how can we tell a false teacher?

His/her truth and life.

Do they introduce destructive heresies... essential teachings that do not square with the Word of God? Peter mentions that some heresies can even go so far as to deny Jesus *who bought them!*

A second indicator is their lifestyle. What might some indicators be? Bold and arrogant (10b). Carousing~~They~~ carouse (13). Greed (14).

Peter is not giving a comprehensive list, but painting a picture. Their lives do not mirror the fruit and character of Jesus the Lord.

If we follow such people we put our lives in peril because we emulate those we follow.

So the Lord whispers into my ear, "Who are you following? What are their teachings? And What does their life look like when examined?"

Who we are listening to matters. Think about it...

Lord, open my eyes to the people I emulate and listen to in my faith. ~~And~~ as a teacher keep me on the straight and narrow, that my teaching and life will build others up and point them to Jesus. I pray in His name. Amen.

Tuesday, March 7: 2Peter 3- Scoffers...

There are many challenges for people who are trying to live faithfully. Yesterday we read about false voices that will try to lead faithful Christ followers astray. Today Peter warns about scoffers, p-People who don't believe, and will ridicule and make fun of Christ followers in the hopes of embarrassing us into unbelief.

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? ... (3-4).

Embarrassment is a powerful de-motivator. It can suck the life out of us. I know I have been there. I have felt the sting of intentional embarrassing comments about my faith. And sadly I have, at times, backed down or felt so insecure and belittled that I didn't continue to witness in order to~~and~~ be a light for Christ in that moment.

Peter's concern, I believe, is not so much momentary backing down –we all stumble and fall –as it is people who abandon their faith in Jesus all together because scoffing causes them to doubt and give up.

By God's grace I have never given up the faith, but I still feel the sting of letting ridicule defeat me in a particular moment. Being scoffed at hurts. And as our world grows more secular the non-religious of the world will, with increasing ferocity, put down any and all religion. Christianity, as a dominant world religion and one committed to humility and non-retaliation, will likely face the brunt of the scoffers' blows.

So I am finding Peter's words powerful and convicting in light of world changes occurring. These 'last days' will present many faith challenges for those of us seeking to follow Jesus.

O Lord, give me strength to endure for You. O Lord, help me to receive with more vigor your challenge to make every effort (1:5) in building and growing my faith. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, March 8: Luke 1- The shine of God's presence...

I am breathless after reading this chapter. So much happens. God is on the move. I marvel at the intricate ways God is working to set up the birth of Jesus, the Redeemer.

Where to pause? Where to meditate? There is so much. Hmmm... life is like that.

There is always much more going on in life than on which we can focus on. What we choose to consider and ponder is only a slice of all that is going on around us. This leads to a nudge from the Lord, "Bill, consider what you choose to dwell on in life. Look for My hand at work, see where I am spreading My good news and ponder that."

I found myself being thankful for Theophilus. Beyond his mention here and in Acts he is an unknown person. And yet because of Luke's desire to give him a firm and accurate grounding in the faith we have two major works of the New Testament. Thank you, Theophilus, for your interest in the faith. Thank you, Luke, for desiring to disciple this dear brother. Thank You, Lord God, for inspiring these words, causing them to be so much more than history; they are Your very words to us about Jesus!

As I meditate on the Word, the sun has just crested the horizon of my yard. My family room is brimming with bright lights on this cloudless morning. My heart feels the same way. I feel as if the light of the Son Jesus is streaming into my life as I read about all the details leading up to His birth. God is on the move. Good news is streaming forth...

And everywhere Jesus is shared and preached and lived, good news continues to stream forth. Halleluiah. It is a glorious day and I get to live it in relationship with my Lord and savior Jesus.

I hope you enjoy Jesus today, too...

Bless You, Father, bless You, Jesus, Bless You, Holy Spirit, for these words, this book and Your grace. Fill me today to be a blessing. Fill me with a passion for You and may my presence, my words, my actions be good news to the people I meet and interact with today. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, March 9: Luke 2—Treasuring Jesus ...

The birth story is so familiar, I wondered if reading it would be the ‘same old’ but it wasn’t. It was as if the Lord had something new for me to see in His Word.

It is the idea of treasuring...

*But Mary **treasured up** all these things and pondered them in her heart (19).*

*But his mother **treasured all** these things in her heart (51b).*

Twice in this chapter Mary takes the amazing and wonderful events of Jesus’ life and **treasures** them in her heart.

I found myself drawn into the idea of treasuring the things of God.

To treasure... to honor, to treat with great respect, to keep safe so as not to lose them, to delight and esteem with great value.

By putting them in her heart Mary is pondering them, chewing and ruminating on them. Again she is valuing them but valuing them in a manner that they get folded into her life. These events were not simply ‘things that happened one day.’ She kept them alive by thinking about them, probing them for meaning and significance and holding them in a way that as time goes by their significance is tied to and grows with the new experiences of Jesus she is treasuring.

Recently I read A. W. Tozer’s *The Pursuit of God*. In chapter 7 he talks about ‘the continuous gaze of the heart at the Triune God... lifting the mind to ‘behold the Lamb of God,’ and never ceasing that beholding for the rest of our lives.”

This; I sense is what Mary did. She never stopped beholding the things her son Jesus did and said and she stored them, as a treasured possession, in the vault of her life.

Oh, to treasure Jesus and the things of Jesus. s... To be able -to recognize His works in the world and to consciously store them so that they give strength and meaning and context to my life. and I to be able to draw upon them for faith, for-and substance, for-and beauty, forand wonder and for awe all my life long... such is the wonder of treasuring and pondering the things of Jesus.

May if be so, Lord. May I grow in my treasuring and pondering of Your great works and ways. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Friday, March 10: Luke 3- Different reactions...

I found myself thinking about the different reactions to John’s message. People who sat under his preaching took his message to heart and wondered, “*What should we do?*” (12).

People of all walks of life began wondering how John’s word applied to their lives, even tax collectors and soldiers –outcasts and disliked people –asked what they should do given their professions. And John told them. The implication of the text is that these people were spiritually hungry and they changed their ways.

But then the story continues, John confronted a person of power, a person who did not come to him. Instead it was someone whom John sought out. *But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother’s wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison (19-20).*

Herod’s reaction was quite different from the populous who sought John out.

Different people, different reactions.

I mused; the populous sought out John and were willing to change. However, John called out Herod who had no interest in changing and had power to do something against John.

Speaking to the spiritually hungry, witnessing to God’s way can be relatively easy and fruit blossoms.

But speaking to the spiritually closed, beware. They likely will not accept your words (judgments) and they may use their power to harm or stop you.

Even as I wrote the above I realized that the two statements above could lead me (us) to live 'safe lives' never speaking God's prophetic words to a corrupt people or a corrupt generation. **However, But** we must follow the leading of the Lord and when God calls us to speak to unsympathetic people or systems we must realize that sometimes we are a 'John the Baptist' –we will suffer earthy loss following Jesus' heavenly directive. **And** other times we may be 'a Jonah' seeing earthy fruit while following Jesus' heavenly directive.

Note to self... follow the Lord's direction and accept what comes whether good or bad. It is the Lord people are following or denying, not me.

Second note to self... make sure you are following the Lord's direction and not some self-generated voice from within.

O Lord, give me ears to hear and a heart to discern YOUR voice, YOUR leading and YOUR call for my life today and every today You allow me to live this side of eternity. And Lord, also give me courage to follow wherever YOUR call leads and to accept whatever the outcome no matter how it affects me personally. I am willing to be a John the Baptist if that is YOUR call for my life. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Saturday, March 11: Luke 4- An opportune time...

Out of this entire chapter of miracles and teaching by Jesus it was the last three words from verse 13 that arrested my attention. *When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time* (13). The devil failing to entice Jesus to sin during his time in the wilderness continued to look for **an opportune time** to come after Jesus again.

I think the devil operates the same way today against all people. He looks for **opportune times** to entice us to sin. And this got me thinking, what might be my weak spots? What might be opportune times to entice me to sin?...

When I am tired... I don't think and act as I might when I am well rested.

The same goes for when I am stressed, or even sick, particularly when I am coming down with something and don't yet recognize its **effects** on me.

I can tend to worry about money and finances, so a chink in my armor can be finances and the devil knows just how to nuzzle his pressures into those chinks.

I have immediate and negative reactions toward whining; so when someone whines to me I often react without grace.

I could continue... when I am anxious about time or pressured driving somewhere, these are more opportune times for the devil to prick and poke and entice me to selfish sin-filled behavior.

By naming some of my weaknesses I hope that I have taken the first step toward victory in these areas...

O Lord, help me face my true self and ask for help with my natural weaknesses and forgiveness for all the times I have fallen. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, March 12, 2017, 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.