

The Weekly Word

October 2-8, 2017

Yesterday was World Communion Sunday, a time for the church universal to stand and celebrate our faith around the table of the Lord. This week in our readings we will reach the climax of the Book of Esther. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, October 2: Esther 8- What's the point...

I was drawn to the final words of this chapter. God would save His people, the Jews. However, was that the only point? According to verse 17b apparently not. ... *And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.* Seeing the work of God, others were drawn to faith in the Lord.

Expansion of His 'family' seems to me is often God's larger point.

Certainly God cares, watches over and protects His people. But God can and does more than that as He watches over His people. He is drawing other people to Himself. From Abram's call from the Lord that God would bless many nations through Abram through the New Testament, God's desire is to draw people from every tribe and nation to Himself.

So many of the miracles of the New Testament Church are 'advertisements' to the greatness of the Lord and invitation for others to come to Him. God is passionate about His name and fame being spread across this globe.

Blessed be the name of the Lord.

This thought gives me pause. What am I doing to be useful to the Lord to advance His name across the world?

Lord, open my eyes to Your bigger picture. You do so much more than immediately meets the eye. You preserve Your church but the purpose is that we, Your church, will make disciples to the ends of the earth. You have a passion for people to be introduced to You. Help me to think more about that as I live my life. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, October 3: Esther 9- 'An eye for an eye' and not more...

Three times these words appear, verse 10, 15, and 16, *but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.* The Jews throughout Xerxes' Empire defended themselves, but they didn't exploit the situation for personal gain.

I just let that thought sit and steep.

The Jews had months, first to worry about, and then plan for their safety. Sometimes when I (we) worry we make situations worse. We desire vengeance and wrath beyond the idea of mere safety. I imagine at least some of the Jews must have had these thoughts. Still when the moment came they warded off thoughts and actions that could be described as wrathful.

I am wondering about times when I have been wronged. Can I ward off wrathfulness?

Growing up I had a saying, "I don't get even, I get ahead." I don't think I really lived that way, it was more bluster of a youngster than a life principle, but it conveys where my thoughts are going. It is so easy to live by that rule. The ingrained human desire to get ahead, to pay back more than we received, was curbed in the life of Israel by the 'eye for an eye' law.

'Eye for an eye' puts a limit on retribution and keeps situations from escalating. Let's face it, if I live by 'getting ahead' and the other person lives by that same rule then any altercation can escalate into full-scale war.

By curbing their desire to get ahead and sticking to defense rather than seizing property the Jews honored their God and the life rules He instituted among them.

Have I allowed God's ways to seep into my life as deeply as the Jews of Esther's day? I'm thinking now of some of Jesus' ways presented in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), turn the other cheek, bless those who persecute you, do not judge, etc.

My life of being a disciple of Jesus it to work Jesus' principles into the very fabric of my life. I still have much work to do kneading Jesus' way into my way of life.

In this chapter I see an example that we can be transformed from the inside out by God's ways.

Oh, Jesus, work in me. Oh, Holy Spirit, work in me, plant Your will and way in me, weave into the very fabric of my life Your will, Your way, Your laws. I pray this in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Wednesday, October 4: Esther 10- What kind of legacy are you crafting?...

Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews (3).

Interesting isn't it that the title of the book is Esther, and yet the closing remarks are about Mordecai who could easily be considered the central person of the book.

Be that as it may, I was brought to a stop reading the final words about Mordecai. I wondered, what my legacy will be. What will I be known for after the days of my 'book' are closed?

Will I serve the Lord with vigor as Mordecai did? Will I work for the good of all God's people as Mordecai did? Will I be scrupulous and conspicuous in my service of Jesus as Mordecai was lying at the gate refusing to pay homage to a man, and being honest and forth right in exposing evil for integrity sake not personal gain?

Will I?

Will you?

Lord, in my remaining years how can I set my legacy as a man who loved and served You, Your people and Your world? I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, October 5: John 1- Ahhh Jesus...

Even though I am committed to reading the Old Testament as well as the New, I always find a vibrancy and delight when I shift from the Old to the New. Reading the Gospels, letters or even Revelations delights my heart and mind as the grace of God. Reading how the living Jesus can touch and change lives blesses me. So with added anticipation I opened today to John 1.

Chapter one traverses a sweeping panorama of truth. Part of me is breathless with the number of truths I could upon which I can meditate. Verse 18 floated to the top and that verse is where I spent the remainder of my time with the Lord.

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

The one and only Son, Jesus, has made God known. And what's more, Jesus is Himself God! Wow. What truth. What wonder. Amazing. Jesus, who is Himself God, made God known. Jesus allows us to 'see' the God who created all things.

In the Old Testament no one was ever allowed to gaze on the figure of God. But in Jesus, God walked among us. He spoke and taught and healed and debated. Ultimately He even died for humanity, offering eternal salvation to all who believe. However, this is getting ahead of the story, as it will unfold in John.

I don't recall reading the plain language of this verse before, that Jesus is Himself God. I don't know how I could have missed it but there it is in black and white... *the one and only Son, who is himself God*. The one and only son is a clear reference to Jesus throughout this chapter.

Twice John has proclaimed this truth. First in verse 1,14 and now in 18.

Raised in a Christian home and proclaiming my faith in Jesus for over 40 years, the truth that Jesus is God never ceases to amaze and comfort me. This is the core of my faith. The one I confess as Lord is God, Creator of all that is seen and unseen. Amazing.

He comes, as verse 14 says, full of grace and truth.

I sit today reveling in the truth of the Christian faith. A truth that has changed my life and given me direction and hope for the whole of my adult life.

Alleluia... I rejoice!

Oh, God, I revel in the truth of Jesus, the one and only Son, full of grace and truth who is God Himself. Alleluia. Amen.

Friday, October 6: John 2- How did she know?...

Along with His mother, Jesus and His disciples attended a wedding. *When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (3-5).*

How did Mary know He could and would do something?

I don't know how to answer that question beyond the word FAITH.

The writer makes it clear that this was Jesus' first miracle or sign of his Messiahship (5), so Mary hadn't seen Him doing miracles before. How did she know?

Again the word 'Faith' comes to me.

Certainly all the things about Jesus she had been treasuring, were adding up. His miraculous conception, angelic announced birth and the stories of the shepherds. That time He stayed in Jerusalem and they found Him at the temple. Still, how did she know He would act now and save the wedding for the groom?

Faith; she believed in Him. Those seeds planted by the events I just noted sprouted into faith so she asked, believing He would act. Notice how she turned to the servants saying, *"Do whatever he tells you,"* immediately after asking Jesus to do something.

Faith is believing what we have not seen (Hebrews 11) and Mary had Faith that Jesus would act.

We are invited to put our faith in Jesus today. Faith, not to change water into wine, but faith that He is the son of God, and that He will transform us into new creations, living for the glory and honor of God. That He will forgive our sins, fill us with the Holy Spirit and that He has prepared works for us to do that will glorify Jesus, the Father and the Spirit (see Ephesians 2:10).

Faith... it is a gift of God and a powerful one at that!

Lord, bless You for opening my eyes to see you and believe in YOU and live for You. May I exercise my faith to live in ways that bring You glory. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, October 7: John 3- ...

Everyone loves John 3:16, *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*, rightly so. It is a powerful summary of the Gospel message and John 3:17 is a good addition. When memorizing, it is good to keep the two together; *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

As I continued reading I came across another excellent pair of verses, which also tells the amazing Gospel of Jesus in a few words. *The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them (35&36).*

Verse 35 calls attention to the supremacy of the Son, everything is in His hands. The Father has granted the Son the place above all else. And then in verse 36 we learn that belief in the Son brings eternal life. There it is... the gift of God. Eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

I realize the verse doesn't use Jesus' name, but a person cannot read this Gospel and miss the fact that the Son is Jesus. It is spelled out in chapter 1 and carried throughout.

Belief in Jesus is the only path to eternal life. Anyone who does not put their faith in Jesus is seen as someone who rejects Jesus. To reject him is to remain under the penalty of sin and therefore covered by the wrath of God.

For the second time in this chapter John explains that belief in Jesus is rewarded with eternal life; without believe we remain under God's wrath... condemned.

I know many people do not like the exclusivity of these statements. However, I don't get to pick and choose what I like in the Bible and what I don't. I choose to believe it all and subject myself to the whole of it.

What about you? Do you believe the Bible? I know there are tough parts to believe and understand, but that is true in many areas of life.

I choose to believe in Jesus and I hope you do as well.

Oh, God, with those sticky difficult areas of faith, help me to hold on with utter tenacity and faith. To believe all Your teachings and Your Words and to remain true to Jesus, Your Son and my Lord. I pray in His name. Amen.

Sunday, October 8, 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.