

The Weekly Word
October 23-29, 2017

I love watching the colors change in the Fall. It is a constant reminder for me of God's infantile creativity. God's Word is a wonder, too... Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, October 23: John 16- Finding Peace...

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (33).

Finding peace in a troubled world, that is one gift Jesus brings. According to Jesus when we have him, we have peace.

While I cannot say that has been true for me every moment since confessing Jesus to be Lord of my life, I can say in the main it has been true. Despite the times I worry and fret, Jesus has always been there. During the darkest times of my life Jesus has been a shoulder I can turn to and cry on and a strong hand to lift me up. Jesus has provided peace that passes understanding. There are times I cannot explain it, but still as the waters rage about me I know Jesus is there with me. This is so hard to explain and yet so wonderful to experience.

Trouble comes... I don't mean to be pessimistic but life does have its share of troubles and I have found Jesus to be my peace during all times of life.

Have you confessed Jesus to be Lord and God of your life?

Confessing Jesus is the first step to finding peace amidst the trouble of life and peace with God, which brings eternal life.

Oh, Lord God, the gifts Jesus brings when we open our lives to him through faith are extraordinary. Peace, companionship, love, forgiveness, redemption, on and on the list goes. Oh, Lord, may I live in a way that point people to Jesus, the one and only Son of God. In His name, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, October 24: John 17- Protection...

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. ... My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one (11-12, 15).

John records Jesus' prayer on the eve of His death. Jesus prays for Himself, the disciples and all who will believe in Him through the message of the Gospel. As He was praying for the disciples He prays for their protection. Is His prayer for protection so that no harm will ever come to them? If that is so, how is it that many of the disciples died for their faith in Jesus and others, like John, suffered imprisonment? What did Jesus mean when He prayed for protection?

In verse 11 He follows His prayer for protection saying, *so that they may be one as we are one*. His protection then is to guard them so that nothing separates them from each other, so that they remain together, unified in Jesus. Certainly the apostles remained unified like this throughout their lifetime.

In verse 12 protection is linked to not falling away from the faith and again that was true. The faith and resolve of the disciples is amazing, given the persecution they at times endured.

Finally in verse 15 Jesus prays for protection from the evil one and to me that is a repeat of what he has prayed. The greatest power the evil one could have would be to pull someone from the salvation God has granted, but Jesus has protected them from that (12). Second would be to put a wedge between them so that the witness of love is destroyed. Again Jesus has prayed specifically for that in verse 11.

My sense is that what Jesus prayed for them counts for us as well as His present day disciples. He has prayed that our faith will hold... Halleluia!. He has prayed that we remain one in spirit and in Jesus... and to that I say Halleluiah once more!

The protection Jesus offers us may not be from any and every harm, but it certainly is protection from the greatest fears... loss of faith and loss of my brothers and sisters in the faith.

Thank You, Jesus, for praying for my protection. May I live well and for Your glory under Your protection. Thank You for caring so much for me, for us, that You have protected us. Again I say, Halleluiah! Thank You, Jesus. Amen.

Wednesday, October 25: John 18- I am the one...

Such an abrupt change from prayers to arrest. If you were new to the story of Jesus, I think the transition from chapter 17 to 18 would strike you as a reader like a punch to the gut. It hit me that way and I know the story!

Jesus' calm through the whole of the evening is such a contrast to Peter's bumbling. The master is in control, despite the situation while Peter teeters on the edge, uncertain, out of balance and about to fall.

During His arrest and questioning before the priests and Pilate, it seems like Jesus controls the events. He speaks and the arrestors fall back. Before Annas they drill Him hard but Jesus, unphased, fires back with a retort they cannot answer. Before Pilate, Jesus is strong and resolute.

Poor Peter, he just cannot measure up. In the garden he resorts to violence, striking someone with his sword. Invited into the garden because his friend vouched for him, Peter crumbles under the weight of a servant girl and other nameless observers.

While I long to be like Jesus, too often I act more like Peter. My bravado of faith, when I am in the company of friends, fades into obscurity sometimes when challenged by outsiders.

Oh, God, seeing Peter is like holding a mirror to my own life... my sins, my guilt, my faults. I am the one stripped naked by this text and these thoughts. I am the one who falls and denies my Savior.

All I can manage to say is...

Forgive me, Lord. Save me, Lord. I am in need of Your grace and mercy again and again. Amen.

Thursday, October 26: John 19- I put him on the cross...

Things certainly turned quickly for Jesus. Little over a chapter ago and a day ago, Jesus was teaching His disciples. By the end of this chapter he has been tried, crucified and buried.

As the account unfolds the Jewish leaders are recorded shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" (6).

I pause to wonder what that must have been like for Jesus, the word made flesh who created all things, to hear the men anointed to preserve and teach your word shouting and calling for your death. Rejection is one thing but to hear hate-speech shouted at you is another level entirely.

My thoughts take me to Good Friday services. For years I have participated in community readings of one of the Gospels. Generally during these services the entire assembly read the words of the crowds or in this case, the religious leaders. Shouting, “Crucify, crucify. Crucify Him.” Saying “Crucify Him,” shakes my heart with terror every year. I have seen others tear up while saying those words.

Remembering those moments as I read John’s account, hammers home what my sin and our sin cost Jesus. When I sin I participate in why that moment had to take place. Jesus was accepting all that abuse because of me and my sin, and you and your sin. Our sin put him in that place. Our sin nailed him to the cross.

Jesus, I am forever grateful that You took my place. You died for me. You paid my sin debt. You endured the taunts and shouts for me, for us, so that we might be restored into relationship with You, the Father and the Spirit. Praise to You, Lord Jesus, my Savior and my God. Amen.

Friday, October 27: John 20- To hear my name...

I sat for much of my devotional time wondering what it will be like to hear Jesus speak my name. I was touched by the instant change in Mary when she hears her name.

At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”) (14-16).

Since Jesus had already spoken with her it was not the sound of His voice but the speaking of her name that jarred her into belief. How powerful the speaking of a name is...

Typing this observation took me back again to my wondering what will it be like when I hear Jesus speak my name? It will have to be in a dream or vision or at my resurrection when I see Him face-to-face. How will I react?

I suspect it will be in the fashion of Mary, who cries out in faith and belief! *Rabboni...* Rabbi, Teacher. Maybe like Thomas, later in the chapter, I will cry out, *my Lord and my God* (28).

To see my Lord face to face will be a thrill, and to hear Him speak my name. I struggle to push my imagination that far. One thing is sure I will be a moment of pure joy.

The chapter concludes with John’s reason for writing his Gospel, *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name* (31).

I believe, I have life Jesus alone can give and I long to see Him and hear Him speak my name...

I hope you do, too.

What joy, what wonder, what awe it will be to see You, Jesus. To be in Your presence and to know I will be with Your family in the presence of my God –Father, Spirit, You –for eternity. Halleluiah! Amen.

Saturday, October 28: John 21- Called to a purpose...

When my children were young after telling them a story, they would often say, “Tell us another story, please...”

At concerts the crowd often cries out for an encore. Chapter 21 is John’s encore.

John begins with his third Jesus-sighting after the resurrection (see verse 14).

The disciples are hanging around together; seven of them are together by the Sea of Galilee one evening.

It hits me they have gone home. They are no longer in Jerusalem. I get the sense they do not know what to do without Jesus. For three years these men have walked where Jesus walked and did what Jesus said. Now He is gone and they seem lost without Him.

When I stop to think, this isn't a surprise. Who wouldn't be lost?

Jesus pulls Peter aside and tells him to 'feed my lambs,' 'take care of my sheep' and 'follow me' (15-19).

I don't get the feel from the passage that Peter yet understands, but that isn't a surprise either. I am sure they are still trying to process Jesus' dying and rising again.

This is in essence Peter's commission to ministry. God was calling him to the apostleship and mission that would define his life.

This event probably happened shortly before what we call 'the great commission'. I went back and looked Matthew 28:16-20 takes place in Galilee.

I found myself contemplating 'calling.' God's calling to each of us to take part in building His kingdom. None of us will be called to be a Peter, but each of us who are called to follow Him are given things to do...

Help the widow next door

Share our faith with the person in the office next to ours

Support this or that ministry with our time, treasures and talents

Serve in your local church

Work to better the lives of a group of people affected by a particular injustice

The list of options is endless...

What has the Lord called you to do to further His kingdom, His name here in our world? Think about it.

Oh, Lord, focus my attention on Your calling. If I am not sure what it is do not let me rest until I am ready to listen. Lead me into the depth of Your calling. Your apostles, those fishermen, didn't get it right away and I might not fully get it either. This is not an excuse, but a begging of You to keep pushing me and calling me until I do get it.

Sending Your Holy Spirit was the turning point in the fishermen becoming fishers of men, dynamos ready to die if necessary for You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, October 29, 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.