

## The Weekly Word

July 27-Aug 2, 2015

I am sad to see Mark end, but the conclusion is God's blessed act of redemption. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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### Monday, July 27: Mark 13- The end will come...

In today's reading Jesus gives a long answer about when the 'end will come.' His last few lines give the punch line. *Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come... "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' "* (33-37).

There will be an end... there will be a judgment and we will all stand before our Maker and answer for our lives. As I ponder this, it doesn't truly matter to me if my end is merely the day I die or the cosmic end of things, someday I will stand before the Lord and He will judge me.

Until the end I need to be about my Master's business... *do not let him find you sleeping*. The message in context is that when He comes (or my time comes), I better be attending to the tasks He gave me. I am an ambassador, a witness, light & salt, etc. I have been called to love and serve, to care for and extend God's reign here on earth...

As I sit this morning, it seems like the best way I 'prepare for the end' is to make sure I am doing God's work today. If I am engaged in God's work today, and all of my todays, then I will be ready whenever the end comes.

*Lord, God, lead me today in the things I should do, so that I am faithful to You today. Then, Lord, help me have this same attitude and pray this same prayer every day. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.*

### Tuesday, July 28: Mark 14- Faith in the face of God's 'No'...

I was drawn to Jesus praying in the garden, His agony and honesty with the Father and self. It was the record of His 3<sup>rd</sup> prayer time that really pierced me. *"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will"* (36).

I stared at His last words: *"everything is possible for you... Yet not what I will, but what you will."*

Absolute faith and absolute surrender.

Jesus knew the Father could do anything... He knew He could do anything. One word from the Father or the Son and the ordeal Jesus was about to endure would end. The answer to Jesus' throbbing heart's cry was not a matter of ability. God could do it.

And yet, at the same time, Jesus knew the Father's answer was 'No, I will not intervene'. This is the course of things that Jesus must walk for salvation's plan to be fulfilled. He had been preparing his disciples for weeks now the day was coming. So with the same steadfastness Jesus showed with his absolute faith he offered absolute surrender. *Yet not what I will, but what you will.*

I don't have as direct a pipeline to the Father as Jesus had. And I certainly do not have the clarity of prayers answered, especially before the prayer is prayed, that Jesus had. So with me it is even more important to maintain the firm stance of absolute faith and absolute surrender displayed by Jesus.

Absolute faith... God can do all; He is mighty to save... and

Absolute surrender... I will not waver no matter God's reply. My faith is not built on a particular outcome.

Paul displayed this with his prayer about the 'thorn in his flesh' (2Cor 12:8-10). The three friends of Daniel displayed this as they stepped into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3: 17-18)...

*O, God, may I display this every day of my life until You bring me home to be with You in eternity forever.  
Amen.*

### **Wednesday, July 29: Mark 15- ... Can a day be both sad and joyous?**

Can a day be both sad and joyous?

The day described in the chapter 15 is both sad and joyous for me.

Sad: That humans can be this cruel and have no true regard for life. To torture and kill an innocent person while letting a murderer and scoundrel go free, shows how expedient we humans can be. It is sad that soldiers can make 'sport' of a person, mocking and torturing them for a few laughs on the way to execution. That spectators would watch this kind of a death and be so up close and personal that they would taunt the dying person and mock him as he died.

The scene itself is incredibly sad. That we humans have done this sort of thing throughout our history reveals how depraved to the core we can be. Sad, very sad.

Joyous -maybe this isn't the right word; happy isn't correct either. Wonderful? Blessed? Whatever the better word might be, this day is arguably the greatest and most important day in human history. As horrible and heinous Jesus' death was, it paid the penalty for human freedom from sin.

Maybe it had to be heinous to match the despicable sins it was covering and atoning for.

On that cross, Jesus paid the penalty of human sin with His life. And that is wonderful... that elicits joy. The greatest blessing humankind has ever received was given that day on that blood-stained cross.

That Friday was absolutely horrible and sad but at the same time it was amazingly good and wonderful. Joy to the world! Jesus' death gives all who believe in Him...life!

All morning I sat and thought about that fateful, terrible, wonderful day...

*Thank You, Jesus. Thank You.*

### **Thursday, July 30: Mark 16- A glorious day...**

Central to the Christian Faith is the resurrection of Jesus. Simply put, no resurrection, no Christian faith.

Mark's account is brief. At the tomb an angelic messenger gives the women this message. "Don't be alarmed, You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' " (6-7).

Three words changed the course of human eternity... *He has risen!*

The women were bewildered. The truth of the resurrection can be bewildering. It is utterly fantastic and beyond normal human existence. And yet, it is central to the Christian faith... Jesus died and rose again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day!

It took the women some time to wrap their heads around this fact. It still takes some people time to come to grips with this truth, but it remains central to our faith.

I sat this morning not wrestling with its truth... I believe. Instead, I sat thinking about how it changes everything.

Since Jesus is raised, then all who believe in Him will also be raised. There is eternal life. My mind flips to 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.*

Belief in Jesus is to be the orientation of my life... living for, serving, following Jesus, this is how one who believes lives...

*Lord Jesus, may I live for You. Give me strength when I am weak, clarity when I am confused, dogged determination when I am tired and a love for You which guides everything. Jesus, I pray this in Your name. Amen.*

### **Friday, July 31: Psalm 52- Handling evil in the world...**

Sadly it seems like every day there is an evil perpetrated in our world. Earlier this summer 9 people at a Bible study were gunned down in cold blood in Charleston, SC. Jos, Nigeria had 2 bombings earlier this month. Wars, genocides, organizations committed to violent advance like ISIS and Boko Haran and others exist. It can be depressing to read the daily news.

We may see more of this due to the global information available today, but evil has existed since the earliest days of humanity. And every one of us has to come up with ways to handle evil.

Today's Psalm is in part David's way of handling evil. The backstory is that David fleeing Saul stops at the priests for supplies (see 1Sam 21). All the priest knows is that David, the king's right hand man, made a request, so he filled it. Word got back to the king that the priest aided David, so the king sent men to the priest to get David. By the time they got there David was gone, so they murdered the priest and his family for aiding a fugitive... EVIL! Innocent people, innocent religious people were killed in cold blood.

And so in today's prayer David processes this evil holding onto God's ultimate judgment. The fact that God will judge everyone in the end does not answer all questions or put salve on all wounds, but it can bring a measure of peace following an evil outbreak.

In an earthly sense one may 'get away with it' but from an eternal perspective, no one will 'get away with it.' David sings: *Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin: He will snatch you up and pluck you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living. ... "Here now is the man who did not make God his stronghold but trusted in his great wealth and grew strong by destroying others!"* (5, 7)

At the same time David professes his ongoing love for and trust in the Lord, his God, and this carries him. *And I will hope in your name, for your name is good* (9b).

I still ruminate much about why there is so much evil in our world and how from an earthly perspective it can seem so unfair. But at the same time I hold onto the truth that God is good and God will execute justice in His time. And for that I wait; more importantly, it drives me to my knees in surrender and praise of the Lord, MY God.

*Praise God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, before whom all humanity, every person, will stand and give an account of their life lived. Secrets will be revealed. Thanks be to the Lord for the blood of Jesus which covers my sins. Praise be to Jesus, my Lord, my God and my Savior. Amen.*

## **Saturday, August 1: Psalm 53- Do you believe in God?...**

Really, do you believe in God?

If you do, where do you get your information and what do you do about your belief in God?

If you don't believe in God, where do you get that information and how does it impact your living?

The psalmist opens with a bold statement: *The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and their ways are vile; there is no one who does good (1).*

Hmmm... belief in God will impact how I live.

What the psalmist sees is that those who don't believe in God live for themselves. Who cares how it will affect others?

I really didn't want to ponder evil in our world so I flipped the statement on its head: **The wise person says in their heart, "There is God." They are honorable, and their ways are admirable; they do good.**

As one who does believe in God, this is a great way to live... in fact it is the way I should live.

Do I? Now my real probing and musings begin. Will you join me???

*Lord, I pray to You each morning, I believe in You. Show me how You want me to live. For Your name and sake, I pray. To Your name and glory, I pledge my life. Amen.*

## **Sunday, August 2 2015, 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](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

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