

Monday, 24 April 2017 Luke 18:9-13

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'

I need to be very, very careful whenever I think I need to remind the LORD, God, the Almighty of all the wonderful things I've done for Him. An infallible sign that my humility needs a complete overhaul.

LORD, continue to make me aware of those defects of lack of humility and pride in my religiosity. I pray for transformation, but with fear and trembling that I can stand up, remaining faithful to Your Word, under the weight of the trials necessary to bring me closer to You.

Tuesday, 25 April 2017 Luke 20:1-7

One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him, "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority." He answered them, "I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?" And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From man,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet." So they answered that they did not know where it came from.

Trapped—the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders were trapped by their pride. They could not, not would not, confess that their commitment to their ritualistic performance of the Law would not allow them to admit failure.

It is very interesting that their analysis was strictly pragmatic and that they found themselves between the Rock and a hard place. Their choice? Stupidity! And by the very men whose authority was supposedly based on a thorough knowledge of the Law. Stupidity is not a defense in the eyes of the Law.

LORD, what is the question You ask me to force me to face my pride? Do not allow me to claim stupidity; force me to acknowledge my failings.

Wednesday, 26 April 2017 Luke 22:66-68

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer.

Compare this with Luke 24:27 where two simple disciples were quick to accept the Scriptures as believable support of Jesus' deity. Again, we have the religious authorities of the day, the ones whose profession was to know and interpret the Scriptures, trapped by stubborn pride.

The elders understood the commitment called for by belief but refused to accept the implications to their cozy power sharing arrangement with the Romans.

Is the Church today trapped by the same stubbornness?

Thursday, 27 April 2017 Luke 24:8-12

And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

There are several points in this passage that present some interesting thoughts regarding belief. The first is that the women heard the testimony of the angels and immediately correlated it with what Jesus had told them before the Crucifixion. "I will rise on the third day, meet Me in Galilee." Was it the power of the empty tomb and the presence of the angels that convicted them?

Why didn't the disciples believe the report? Just an idle tale by a bunch of hysterical women? We must not forget that women were considered to be chattel in this culture. Does that attitude carry over into today when we hear the testimony of someone whom the culture relegates to an ignominious position?

But the most startling to me is that Peter went, looked in, saw and believed, but it was a casual belief, inspiring thought—he went home and marveled—it did not inspire transformation, he was not yet the Peter of the Day of Pentecost; he was just beginning the growth spurt, the breaking of the bond of his chrysalis of doubt and timidity. Peter gives me hope, he leads the way towards the full life in Christ that I hunger for.

Friday, 28 April 2017 Luke 24:25-27

"And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Aren't we still slow of heart to believe, really, truly, believing, trusting, having faith, committing, obeying? Sure, that Christian stuff is nice, I'm all for love, but don't ask me to give any of the innocent little pastimes and passions that I enjoy so much. A little porn—harmless, no victim. Yes, my language is a little coarse—I'm not really using God's name in vain, it's just an expression. What do you mean to trust Him in all things, well how about the big stuff like world peace? I'll take care the little stuff—no need to bother a busy god.

Saturday, 29 April 2017 Luke 24:40-45 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them. Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

Isn't that a strange term, "disbelieved for joy." Does Luke mean that the disciples' joy prevented them from believing? They saw His scarred hands and feet; they saw that He was not some sort of hallucination, he spoke and conversed with them. No, I think the key is in the last phrase quoted, "He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." To speak with Him, watch Him eat, to see Him as a physical being and so forth meant nothing until He opened their minds. So it is today, read the Scriptures, sing the hymns, pray and faithfully attend church on Sunday morning mean nothing until the Spirit opens the mind. But then, but then Pentecost and the transformation of the mind so that the new disciple can begin to recognize the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Lord's Day, 30 April 2017 Psalm 119:165

Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.

This is a day for testing this, I do love Your Law, I love You, I love the Word, I love living in the Kingdom—I have perfect and sufficient helps. Praise You, My Lord and Master. Keep my feet from stumbling over the Evil One's wiles.

VOICES TOGETHER

Daily Meditations from the Scriptures



April 24-30, 2017

Prayer of the week, based on Paul's prayer in: Ephesians 3:16-19
And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

LORD, we pray that in the coming year, the [congregation] will grow in the power of Your love, that we will exercise every fiber of our being in the declaration of the immense scope of that love, and that we will spare no effort to bring others into the righteousness, peace and joy that is life in the Kingdom.

Amen

Creational Theology hint for the week—The snow is gone! For now! The front yard is developing a green patina that will deepen over the summer. The first of Vermont's 50 shade of green that comprises our summer vistas. I've tried to count them as a drive but it is an impossible task.

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