

Archived April-May 2009

April 10, 2009

On The Cross (Reading of Luke 23:26-56)

The Crucifixion

26 As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. 27 A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.

28 Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'

30 Then "they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" [d] 31 For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals —one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." [e] And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

35 The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One."

36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar 37 and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

38 There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. [f]"

43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

Jesus' Death

44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

47 The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." 48 When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. 49 But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Jesus' Burial

50 Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, 51 who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. 52 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. 54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

55 The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. 56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

April 9, 2009
On The Night

"Maundy Thursday" is an English name for the Thursday before Good Friday. As you remember, this is the night when Jesus served the Last Supper, presented His new covenant, prayed in the Garden, and soon was betrayed and arrested.

The Book of Common Prayer uses the name "Holy Thursday". Other English-speaking Protestant Churches, such as the Lutheran and Methodist, use both "Maundy Thursday" and "Holy Thursday". The word Maundy is derived through Middle English, and Old French mandé, from the Latin mandatum, the first word of the phrase "Mandatum novum do vobis ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos" ("A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you"), the statement by Jesus in the Gospel of John (13:34) by which Jesus explained to the Apostles the significance of his action of washing their feet. Next to be performed by the Messiah was the presentation of the Meal and precursor of events that lead to His death and resurrection.

"Where is the guest room, where I may eat the passover with my disciples?" Jesus instructed his disciples to ask this question to the owner of the house. His devoted followers found everything that He indicated. All the furnishings were present and the

food preparations were made. Every time I read about the Last Supper (Luke 22:7-38), I cannot help but to put myself in several positions of the story: the owner, disciples, Christ himself and the betrayer. It had to have been a curious thing for the owner of the house to have a room prepared for Jesus and his disciples. Along with His followers, the owner was not aware of what was about to take place. It had to have been an eery feeling on behalf of the disciples, not being fully aware that darkness and suffering was looming. For the Christ, I simply have no words to explain. As the Scripture says in Rm 8, there are groanings that cannot be uttered. He loved his disciples and knew that he had come to finish the work that God began long ago.

We hear the words of Christ as he explains how he must suffer. Little did they know, He was the Passover Lamb. The Messiah exclaims how he has eagerly desired to eat the Passover feast with them (v.15). We are also told that this meal will resume as the Kingdom of God is completed. It's obvious that His followers did not understand the full ramification of what was spoken. Jesus indicated his death and suffering. They too, were going to suffer, a time of morning was about to dawn.

On the night, He took up the bread and the cup, identifying them as his body and blood. This was not an act of mere symbolism, but an actual partaking of the death of Christ and the resurrection to come. It was also an act of worship as they responded to his call into a deeper fellowship and a perfect relationship into the New Covenant. The body was to be broken, identifying the breaking, death and penalty of sin. He said, "This is my body, given for you; do this in remembrance of me." The cup contained the new covenant in His blood, identifying the purging, cleansing and forgiveness of sin. The wine of Christ was to be consumed as it completed and sealed the new covenant. This is the fulfillment of God's promise of the Messiah from the time of Creation.

The Lamb took up the cup saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." Not only was the new covenant offered to those he loved, it was also offered to his enemies, even the one who betrayed him. Jesus went on to say, "But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table" (v.21). What a shock it must have been. You could feel the swell of tension and remorse in the room. It's interesting how he made mention of the 'hand'. The very hand of his enemy was also going to be pierced with the hand of Christ on the cross. Yet, Jesus, in his mercy, did not seize his betrayer nor did he withhold the supper from him. This is true demonstration of grace and mercy being rendered even before the Event. The disciples questioned who would do such a thing. Astoundingly, in v.25, they went as far as to claim who was to be the greatest. Jesus assured them that the lowly is to be the greatest. The one who serves will rule. The Messiah is the One who came as a bond servant and now is about to serve His life for all of humanity. This is the ultimate act and life of a Servant.

On this night - as you partake and remember the life and death of Christ do this as an act of worship. Put yourself in the place of his disciples, betrayers, thieves and in His place as he suffered and died for us. Our identity is in Christ - both death and life. For those who confess that He is the Christ - the Holy Messiah, died and forgave us of our sins - we have new life in Christ - we are forged into His new covenant by His blood. We

were crucified, died, buried and raised to new life in Christ. As you worship with your congregation during the end of this Holy Week - do this in remembrance of Him. Worship Him in his life, death resurrection and coming. Share this Holy Feast and the Life of Christ with those who are in need of the Messiah.

April 6, 2009
Sing For Joy

There is nothing like the sound of the human voice. Like a fine tuned cello, it ranges from rich deep tones to high cascades of sweet melodies. More importantly, when joined with brothers and sisters, our voices become one in an amphitheater of corporate praise. In worship, I become so moved by the voices that I actually stop singing. In awe before God's beauty, I mouth the words, yet nothing comes out. My heart serenades a love song to the Lord, yet I cannot speak a word. My vocal abilities become dependent on those around me. Enamored in God's praise, we as one Body, fix our eyes on our living Hope. In times of struggle and sorrow to times of great happiness, worshiping the Lord is good for our souls. Even in worship, the Lord in His wonder, ministers back to us as we adore him. He sings over us (Zep. 3.17) when we have the words in which we cannot utter or pray (Rom 8.26). In a mysterious way, the Lord heals as we respond to Him in worship. Even at times when we do not feel joyful, we sing for the purpose to have his joy fill us as He is praised. We sing for joy when we experience loss. We sing for joy when we are suffering. We sing for joy when we are physically down. Our weeping and mourning may endure for the night - but joy surely comes in the morning (Ps. 30.5). In this joy, we rise upon wings of eagles. The joy of the Lord is our strength (Ps. 28.7). By the way, when was the last time your congregation sung so loudly, that you could not hear the band?

Sing for joy to God our strength;
shout aloud to the God of Jacob! (Ps. 81.1)

May 29, 2009
Is Church Worth It?

This title may be a bit controversial. I have received this question from many of our readers this past year: Is church worth it? Many who have written in, that I've kept confidentially, have expressed their hurt, grief and pain from unhealthy conditions in the church in which they serve or worship. I first would like to say that I am sorry for the pain you have endured. Even those who may be reading this right now maybe experiencing some kind of loss or burn by those you have either loved or trusted.

Trust is a commodity in relationships, others say that respect and credibility is our commerce. While this maybe true, the Church is made up of broken and imperfect people. We are not to view the Church as a banking center. Relational fallouts really stink, but they do happen. It hurts even more when we experience painful happenings

from our leaders. Personally, as a minister, I bear the marks and scars of my rough roads. Same is true when we read about the life of Paul. We are the Church. A living breathing Body created to be the visible representative of the invisible God. Like the human body, we are not immune from any illnesses, cuts or bruises. When we do undergo pain, Christ binds our wounds and he binds us together - as the Church. We are His Bride; he will make all wrongs right as he brings healing - even now. We have a responsibility in presenting ourselves useful to Christ, so God may find his Bride spotless as it brings him glory (Eph. 1).

Yes, I do believe people need church - the Church. Finding a congregation free of blemishes, unfortunately does not exist. I wish it were true, but that's Heaven. My family and I have been turned and burned by people in this life as well. However, we are not to forsake the assembling of the church (Heb. 10:25). Here's why, if the Church is made up of many members, we are the Body. Right? Who is the head? Right, Christ himself. When we forsake the Body, we are setting ourselves apart from the head as well. No it doesn't mean we lose our salvation, it means that we are not in fellowship with the local flock - under His care. When we try to function on our own, it's like trying to function w/o that arm or foot that works correctly.

I've been there. We've all been there and maybe still are here right now. Being the isolated foot or hand is pretty lonely. Although, I do understand the pain, hypocrisy and the like that's in the church. But God has placed you, myself and others there to help the Body move along - as we need each other. So we are as much as an assistance to others as well as a representative to the world.

More importantly, Christ calls us to be the Body - the Church. When the Body works well, we benefit from and build up each other. I do empathize with you and wish circumstances were different. The Enemy is the one who wants to break the Body. In Christ, by his strength and power, He has the last word. He can mold, shape and bend hearts, as He does in us.

May 27, 2009
Second Chances

The Lord says in Exodus 34:1 "...chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke." It is amazing to witness and experience the patience of God. What are the tablets in your life that God gave and were broken? I don't mean commands, laws and expectations. I mean the way in which God called you to live by seeking the good things. There is a different way in looking into second chances.

We are owned by a God of joy not out of requirement. Because of Christ, he has taken the law and sin away. In it's place, we are now wrapped in clothes of grace and girded by a belt of truth. He has called us to die to ourselves. When we do, He writes his love,

mercy, forgiveness and grace on the tablets of our hearts. He has called us to seek the good things in Christ (Matt. 7: 7-8). New opportunities, dreams and relationships await. I think about the first tablets I've destroyed. Sweating and working in my own strength can never amount to the life giving fruit of the Spirit. I've missed certain marks and passed up events in which the Lord was directing. From those bad decisions, I've encountered the consequences. However, we are loved by a God who always makes a new way.

When He leads, it is always for our best because it leads to the peaceable fruit = joy. How patient is the Lord God with his servants. As we have the opportunity, may we listen, obey and follow God, who causes our gloom to turn to joy. Whatever that second chance is in your life, God has already written his message that lays upon your heart.

May 19, 2009

What Songs Are You Singing?

What songs are you singing in your church? What are the lyrics saying? Do the words resonate in your heart that enables you to connect passion to worship? How can songs of joy or deliverance be used to encourage the souls of others?

Recently, my family and I have experienced sever hardship and loss. Sometimes, staying in the pits is all we know. Going through the grieving process is healthy and only natural. We have sung songs of sorrow and have experienced how these songs have turned to joy. The Lord calls us to respond. Even in our pain, the Lord hears our words. Even in times when we can't utter a word, the Lord sings over us (Zeph. 3:17). One of my most favorite verses from the Psalms comes from verse 40, which says:

1 I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.

2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.

3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear
and put their trust in the LORD.

The Lord always hears us as we wait and are patient, trusting him in love. He hears our cries and comes to our defense. He lifts us out of the dark canyons into his marvelous

light. We are able to stand on the foundation of Christ, which is never weary nor grows faint. He fills us with new songs to sing. Melodies of praise that declare his victories. When others hear our songs, they recognize the work of the Lord. May the songs we sing encourage others to put their trust in the Savior.

What songs are currently affecting you in your personal/spiritual life?

May 5, 2009

Need Your Help - Song Leader or Worship Leader?

Good morning WTT friends! May you walk in the blessings of Christ in this day. This morning, I just got a query response/question for WTT and thought you'd like to share some input. Hit reply and share a thought or two. After responses post, we will move this topic to our Forum Discussion.

Message/Question:

"maybe you have already answered this on the WTT site, but what is the difference between being lead singer in a worship band and actually leading worship? how does one make that transition? "

Thanks for your input friends.

5.5.09 Post: mcline

"I think that there isn't one worship leader, but everyone on the stage is a worship leader. Some of the worship leaders are vocalist, some worship leaders are guitar players, some are drummers, and some can do all of that at once :) Everyone on the stage should be trying to facilitate worship with God."

5.6.09 Post: Terry

What strikes me as a core and central principal to the discussion is the analogy that you used in referring to worship styles and languages. That would seem to imply that we should be speaking (or worshiping, if you will) in a manner that the congregation at hand understands and can participate. How very difficult that is when the preceding ministries taught principals that focused much more on methodology than on the core principals of authentic worship. Though there have been wonderful sermons and gifted explanations, we seem to continue to suffer from those lessons of the past that taught to worship the worship, instead of worshiping the Lord. I think you are doing a spectacular job of balancing the two opposing camps and I do see movement from the poles by some that I would never have expected to be in any way flexible. I marvel at how much I yet have to learn in my walk with the Lord and how small my steps still are. I pray for you every

day, my friend, and I thank God for his gift of your presence in our church. I look forward to learning each and every week from you and Rev. Kev.

5.6.09 Post: Scott

Being able to sing melody clearly and being able to lead are two different things. Often the two coincide, but not always. One requires musical ability, the other requires a close walk with God, leadership skills, the ability to communicate what God has taught them, and the humility to be used of God. The worship leader is not always the best or strongest singer in the band, but it needs to be the one chosen by God to lead.

To make that transition, one needs to live daily a life honoring to God and being a spiritual leader in all aspects of life. One cannot expect to stand on a platform or stage and lead if they are not doing these things. Humility is also a very important ingredient. Without it, a leader risks leading in the flesh, which is more common than you can imagine.

Consider what a worship leader is supposed to do, what their job is. Then compare that to one of the great leaders in the Bible, Moses. He was a leader who possessed all the qualities needed in a worship leader - closeness to God, meekness, a sense of the spiritual temperature of those around him, and the ability (through God's strength) to communicate where that group or congregation should be going.

Seek God first, learn His Word thoroughly, be willing to be used, find teachable moments to speak into and let God move you into a position of leadership.

Worship Team Training
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Workshops and Resources to Inspire, Create and Transform the Leading of Worship.