Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

The Revolution – Week 30

The Revolution is real.

Day 203: The Mission

The mission of the church "is to implement the victory that Jesus won on the cross" (if you like to read, you may enjoy, for a full examination of the mission of the church, The Day the Revolution Began by N.T. Wright).

By following the Path of Christ?

By accepting the forgiveness of our sins through the death and resurrection of Christ, and fully embracing our creation as Images of God.

What do you mean – I thought the Path was everything?

Christianity isn't (and cannot be) a legalistic "I follow the path better than you" religion. The Path is important, the path is healthy – but the Path is for humanity, not humanity for the Path. It points to life, it is not life itself.

So what IS this faith all about?

That's a great question: what is Christianity all about?

Share your answer with others whom you trust.

Day 204: The Cross

The New World of God begins with Jesus on the cross.

How is that?

The cross stands at the center of the Christian message, the Christian story, and the Christian life and mission.

I thought love, and forgiveness, and following "the Path" were all at the centre?

Yes! But they are all outflows. The cross is the inflow. The centre of Christianity is that Jesus "gave himself for our sins, to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of God our Father" (Gal. 1:4). God, through the sin-forgiving death of Jesus on the cross, frees **us** from the power of the present evil age so that **we may be part of** God's new age, his new creation. Launched when Jesus rose from the dead, awaiting its final completion when he returns, the New Creation is active now through the work of

the rescued rescuers,
the justified justice-bringers,
the reconciled reconcilers,
the exodus emigrants,
the followers of Christ.

You.

Try drawing a picture of the relationship between Jesus on the cross, love, forgiveness, the Path of God, and the New Creation.

Share your picture with others whom you trust.

Day 205: A new symphony

Explain this idea of "freedom" you talk about.

Let me explain with a story, like Jesus did with His parables:

There was a person who was an extremely accomplished musician – no one could play the flute better than he. He studied hard, played hard, and loved everything about the flute. He was proud of his performances as well – the orchestra played very well together. Here is a sample of one of their finest pieces: Feldman - Neither.

Then, one day, a new conductor came into their orchestra. This new conductor spoke to each of them in turn and reinforced their capability, their unique talent as shown in the different instruments each could play. He then gave them a surprising announcement: "We are no longer going to play the old music. Instead, we are going to play music which gives people life." And so he introduced them to Jesu, Joy Of Man's Desiring, and Ode to Joy, and many other pieces. A whole new world opened up for the flautist. He found he was not only proud of the performances, but they filled him with joy.

One day, someone in the orchestra decided, for some reason, to play the old tune. The discordant notes of *Neither* clashed terribly against the uplifting recurring harmony of *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. Though it was only one person, the performance of the entire orchestra was ruined.

The conductor stopped the orchestra and put down his baton. He spoke to them all. "Before I came, your technical expertise, your unique capabilities, were developed to an extremely high level. But you were trapped – you knew only one world of music, one outlook in how to play. I came and freed you from knowing only that one world. You were brought into a new world, with harmonies instead of discords, and new ways of understanding music and its wonderful power of creation. You served a new master.

"You now have the freedom of playing the old music or the new music. However, I am conducting only the new way of music, for it is the music of life, of forgiveness, of love. It is the music you were created for.

"If you decide to play the old music while I am conducting the new music, you "sin" – you miss the mark of what I am conducting. This is very serious, for it not only corrupts my music, it corrupts the music of the entire orchestra. Everyone else can be pursuing the new music, but all are affected if someone insists on following a different musical score. The audience will not hear what is intended. Everyone will be wounded.

"Even more serious, you empower whichever music you play – you give your power, your capability of creation, into the service of that music and bring it to life. Therefore, whether the old music gets heard, or the new music, or a corruption of the two, is entirely up to you. For now that I have taught you the new, and you already knew the old, you are free to serve either one."

The conductor picked up his baton. “Shall we try again?”

What does “freedom” mean for you in living a life with Christ?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 206: The new and glorious power

We previously asked, "What new and glorious power do you think has been unleashed through the death of Christ?"

Yes.

There is a power given to each and every follower of Christ, for them to use if they desire – a power which upends the existing rulers of the world and strips them of their authority. What is THE identifying characteristic which Christ said His followers would be identified by?

I think it goes like, "I give you a new commandment—to love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples—if you have love for one another."

You think right.

All you need is love (cue music)?

It's two-fold: forgiveness and love. Note that forgiveness is a very specific (and very powerful) subset of love.

Add in 1st John (God is love …)?

How is forgiveness and love a new super-power, unleashed through the death of Christ?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 207: Forgiveness and love.

Through Jesus' death and resurrection, rescued humans are set free to be what they were made to be: Images of God. Forgiveness, through Jesus giving himself for our sins, is the key to liberating victory. As the music parable illustrated, sin matters. The key to love is forgiving sin because sin corrupts, distorts, and disables the image-bearing vocation, the vocation of playing the music of the great conductor, Jesus.

If we believe that on the cross Jesus won the victory over evil, the heart of that victory is the forgiveness of sins.

People sometimes mistake forgiveness with tolerance or the declaration of a general "anything goes" or "I live by my own truth" kind of amnesty. Forgiveness does not mean that. Forgiveness is correlated with repentance. Repentance actively turning away from the idols one has been worshipping. Love is not accepting evil – love is doing what is always most healthy for the person. Sometimes it means pointing out the harm their behaviour is doing for them or others. Forgiveness is understanding the harm their behaviour has caused, and pursuing health, no matter how hard it may be emotionally. Forgiveness is never accepting the harmful behaviour.

What do you mean?

If the orchestra is playing "Ode to Joy" and I start playing "Neither" in the middle, it doesn't work for the conductor to say, "I forgive you" and let me continue on. The music is ruined. However, if I apologise for giving my power to the creation of old music, and instead actively work (sometimes with great difficulty!) to create new music as directed by Jesus the conductor, then I become ready to receive forgiveness. In other words, if I start to play "Ode to Joy", no matter how poorly, but I give it my all, then I am ready to receive forgiveness. Otherwise asking for forgiveness can be a matter of "let me get away with what I want" rather than truly seeking forgiveness.

How do I relate that to my life?

The gods are not new. People have worshiped Mammon (money and wealth), Aphrodite (sex and physical satisfaction), and Mars (war and dominance) since there have been people. The worlds of profiteering, of lotteries and gambling, of sex, lust, and objectification of people, of killing, bullying, vengeance and self-righteousness are all just a mouse-click away. These are all false gods, hollow powers, robbed of their potency through Christ on the cross. Followers of Christ are to worship Christ, God, alone – not these worldly powers.

When we give them our power, we bring them to life. They have no life unless people give it to them. When we actively turn from them, no matter how hard it is (and it can be extremely hard!), we give our power to the one and only true God, with Jesus His Son. When someone

actively turns from the gods of the world to the true God, we are to forgive them and love them by doing what is healthiest for them and encourage them in playing the New Music of God our loving Father – and play it for them as well, so they can hear it as clearly as we can provide it. Forgiveness is serious business. Always do what is healthiest for the other.

Explain forgiveness in your own words.

Share your explanation with others whom you trust.

Day 208: Love and Forgiveness.

I don't get it – how does forgiveness stop war? Stop gambling? Stop sexual predation?

The god Mammon is defanged when we use money for healthy living, especially in giving money away to improve the welfare of others and worship our true Lord. This reinforces that money does not master us, but we master it.

The god Aphrodite is defanged when we do not pursue physical satisfaction on every occasion, but celebrate and sustain marriage, celebrate and sustain celibacy, and counsel and comfort those who, in either state, find themselves overwhelmed with conflicting and contrary desires. When we refuse to view others as objects for our pleasure, and do not let our bodily desire for pleasure (of any kind) define our existence or pursuits, we point the way to health. When we do not define ourselves by the longings and aspirations out of our hearts, but rather we define ourselves as Images of God, fellow children with Christ, then Aphrodite is disempowered.

The god Mars is defanged when we refuse to fight back when attacked, refuse to cause harm (of any kind) to others even though it is within our power. Mars only has power when we listen to, and act on, the urgings to dominate or destroy.

All worldly gods are defanged when we do not pursue or talk to them but listen constantly to the conductor who guides us with a Song of Healing, Jesus. Prayer is of first importance. All worldly gods are rebuked when we insist on following Jesus' musical score, even to the point of suffering ourselves. All worldly gods are mocked when we forgive rather than seek punishment or retribution. Forgiveness is serious business, and often involves the acceptance of suffering.

Jesus' followers are not immune to Christ's suffering on the cross, in fact Jesus warned us to expect suffering. Most of Jesus' followers will themselves continue to be troubled from time to time by temptation in relation to money, sex, domination, and many other things beside. At the heart of the Good News is a revelation of true power. The reason the cross carries such life-changing power is because it embodies, expresses, and symbolizes the true power of which all earthly power is either an imitation or a corrupt parody: the power of love and forgiveness.

We all choose whether we shall play the old music or the new, and we are free to serve either one.

How do you see yourself as part of the Revolution, living in the New Creation of God in forgiveness and love?

Share your insights with others whom you trust.

Day 209: Rest

We come again to the seventh day, so today we rest. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you.