Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

There's a war going on – Week 31

The war is everywhere.

Day 217. Confusion in the ranks

I have another observation.

Go for it.

It seems to me that some people outside the church can act more lovingly, with more forgiveness, in fact follow a Path of Life better than some people inside the church.

You're rather astute.

So how can you say "Jesus is the only way" or "the church is the Temple of God" or "you need to be baptised?"

What did Jesus say?

"Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

He also said

"I have other sheep that do not come from this sheepfold. I must bring them too, and they will listen to my voice, so that there will be one flock and one shepherd."

I am confused.

Maybe another story will help.

Describe your confusions between Christ, Christians, and non-Christians.

Share your answer with others whom you trust.

Day 218: An overview

Once there was a being. The being called itself "I AM" – which fit really well, because it was the only being in existence. This is well before there was a universe, well before there was time – if you can have a "before" when you don't have time. Perhaps it may be described as the timeless non-place. I AM decided it would be delightful to share existence with other beings – and so, it created them. It created energy. Stuff which vibrated, stuff which moved. As soon as energy was created, the first side-effects were space and time. Some energy was in the form of light, which then immediately defined the absence of light as darkness. Some was in the form of energy which vibrated at speeds slower than light. There was the electromagnetic spectrum. There was sound. There was gas. There was liquid. There was solid.

I AM combined the energy forms in many fantastic and wonderful ways – and into some of those forms, I AM imbued life – the capability to ingest energy, convert it for its own use, even replicate itself (or create new forms) so life could multiply across generations.

Into some life, I AM imbued forms of intelligence – some greater, some lesser. Some intelligence existed only in non-material energy segments, some existed only in the material plane, and some crossed both.

Into one very special creation, a form of intelligence which spanned both the material and non-material energy planes, I AM formed a being in its own image – a being with understanding and wisdom, a being which could represent I AM to the rest of I AM's creation in terms of love and caring.

I AM walked throughout creation, especially being filled with joy in the companionship of the special being it had created.

There were many other intelligences in this creation, some of which confused, deluded, and misguided the special creature. They led it away from I AM, and into relationship with themselves.

The special creature, when it gave into delusion, gave up its relationship with I AM, and with each other. Murder and war were created. Contempt and disdain, hatred and scorn, loathing and disgust were all new creations from the delusion of the special creature.

I AM was distraught. It spoke to its special creatures, Some listened and shared that I AM wanted a restored relationship with their fellows. As a reward, many of them were killed or banned, and almost all of them were rejected.

Finally I AM came into creation Himself, in the person of one of these special creatures. He taught how He wanted them to live, in love. He healed many of them, especially those who had been rejected or hurt by others. He was able to get a small number of the special creatures to follow Him – but the leaders of the special creatures, still under the delusion of the other intelligences and filled with their own fears and ambitions, killed Him.

I AM died. I AM went to where those who had rejected Him had previously died, and encouraged them to change their ways. I AM resurrected, re-entered the material plane in an upgraded energy form, and taught those who had followed Him that there was no power in the other intelligences unless they gave it to them. I AM taught that they were free to live with I AM, or could live following the other intellengences. They were free to choose, and their eyes had been opened to the wickedness of following the other intelligences.

For a while, those followers had great energy and zeal – they broadcast the depth and breadth of I AM's love to all their fellow creatures, and did their best to represent I AM to all of creation. They had a huge influence, as many, many of their fellow creatures turned away from following the other intelligences, and joined in walking with I AM, as best they could. They were in a war, and they knew it. They had great victories, and many were changed from death to life.

The other intelligences did not give up, however – they were highly intelligent, they were strategic, they were cunning, and they stopped at nothing to get their way.

Over time, the other intelligences convinced many of those who were following I AM that there wasn't really a difference between following I AM and not following I AM.

Over time, they convinced many that there wasn't really a battle to be fought, at all.

Over time, they convinced many that I AM wasn't even really there.

The other intelligences spoke in partial truths and deceptions. For, in some respects, there wasn't a difference if people followed I AM or not – I AM still loved them, still called to them, and they were still created in I AM's image. Because of this, some of those who did not explicitly know or acknowledge I AM, especially if they had not followed the other intelligences, actually followed I AM and His Way better than some of those who did explicitly acknowledge I AM.

I AM gave the special beings great freedom and independence – and in that, many of them again drifted away from I AM, not acknowledging His presence amongst them. Many of them sought I AM in their struggles, but became bitter or angry when they didn't perceive I AM answering their needs. Many of them decided that they had been mistaken, and they weren't really Temples of I AM, that I AM didn't really exist after all.

The ways of the other intelligences led to death – for that was their weapon. The ways of I AM led to love and forgiveness, service and sacrifice – for those were the weapons of I AM. The war wasn't a war as the intelligences thought of war, for the battle was (and is) very one-sided – the intelligences seeking to accuse and destroy the followers of I AM, and the followers of I AM seeking to provide life to those through whom the intelligences were attacking them.

What is the difference between following I AM and not? How do you know if I AM is really there? Describe how we are (or are not), in fact, in a war, and if it is one-sided? Write your thoughts on the above story.

Share your thoughts with others whom you trust.

Day 219: Thoughts

The Apostle Paul wrote, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens."

We truly do not oppose other people. We truly, if we are following the Way of Christ, pursue only what is healthies for them. However, we do oppose, and oppose strongly, spiritual forces of evil in all our lives. We oppose any intelligence which leads us into death. So if there is intelligent evil…

I'm not sold on that yet – though The Screwtape Letters is entertaining!

… and there exists a body which God inhabits …

The church (at least those who do the will of God) and those outside the "official" church who do the will of God… The Family of Christ, I guess Jesus would say …

… wouldn't that evil intelligence do its best to destroy, divert, disfigure, dishevel, and otherwise disempower God's body?

… Let me think …

If for no other reason than if that body gets its act together, that intelligent evil is in very real trouble?

That makes sense I guess – if you can convince the enemies' army that there is nothing to fight, the battle is over before it even begins.

Write your thoughts on the above.

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 220: Characterizing Evil (part 1)

You made the observation, "*Now that I'm on the "inside", it seems to me that people "in" the church frequently act and speak more evil towards themselves and others than people outside of the church*."

Perhaps when you encounter evil within the church (and you will if you haven't already), just perhaps, you can have pity for the person that evil comes through.

Why pity?

Because if evil has them destroying, diverting, disfiguring, and otherwise disheveling, while they have made an explicit (or even implicit) declaration to be the Temple of God …

They deserve pity. And grief. In fact, great, great, sadness. Sorrow. And prayer.

Thank you.

Can you think of someone in the church who has done evil in some way? Can you pray for them?

No sharing with others today, just share with God.

Day 221: Characterizing Evil (part 2)

The early Christians were convinced that they were in a war between good and intelligent evil. As briefly mentioned earlier, the Apostle Paul ("Apostle" could be translated as "Ambassador") wrote,

… be strengthened in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. For this reason, take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand. Stand firm therefore, by fastening the belt of truth around your waist, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness, by fitting your feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace (shalom), and in all of this, by taking up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God). With every prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and to this end be alert, with all perseverance and petitions for all the saints.

Our struggle is not against "flesh and blood" – this means our struggle is not against people, but for poeple. Rather, our struggle is against evil in all its forms. Our weapons are truth, living rightly according to God, declaring and sharing shalom, our faith in Christ, the hope of our salvation in Him, and the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit. Communicate (pray) with God all the time to get your battle orders and report on how you're carrying them out. And especially lift up prayers for the "the saints" – your fellow doers-of-God's-will in the battle.

Think of someone who has harmed you badly. Now picture them with an evil presence overlaying them, influencing their actions, including the action(s) which harmed you. Now, picture them freed from that evil presence. Can you pray that they indeed be freed from that evil presence? If you are unable to because of the trauma which you have encountered, discuss that with God, or even with someone you trust very, very much.

Pray.

Day 222: A battle plan

The powers which oppose God have traditional names which describe how we may identify them at work. I've spoken of Mars (a roman god), Aprodite (a greek god), and Mammon (the Hebrew word for money). Also fairly well known are Satan (or "the Satan") (a Hebrew word meaning "adversary, one who plots against another,") or or the devil (from the Greek word *diabolos*, meaning "accuser, slanderer.").

Evil can be characterized by its actions. If someone is falsely accusing or slandering you, that one is literally acting in a devilish manner. If someone is plotting against you or being your adversary, that one is literally acting in a satanic manner.

The early Christians adopted the two-fold approach of Jesus when facing evil:

a.) Identify the "spirit" (you may be more comfortable with the phrase "type of action being observed"). Name it. Bring it to Jesus, and assert His authority over it.
b.) Continue to persist in following God's Way and pursuing what is healthiest for the person or people involved.

For example, if you know of a war going on, you could:

a.) Name the war (either literally through the word "war", or by association, such as alluding to the Roman god of war, Mars). Assert Jesus' authority over the spirit of war.
b.) Write letters to the governments involved, urging them to peace. Contribute to humanitarian relief for those impacted by the war.

Example:

a.) "War between Russia and Ukraine, you have no power except what people give you. Jesus the Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth, given by the great I AM, the Father above. In Jesus' name therefore, I command you, war, to stop your actions. Stop killing people, and stop teaching them to kill."
b.) Contribute to Pwrdf relief, targeting the money to war relief. Write letters to the governments of Canada, Ukraine, and Russia, urging they focus on stopping this war and embrace a long-lasting peace. Picture Ukraine and Russia without war. Continue to seek what is healthiest even if you do not receive a response.

Another example, this time dealing with drug addiction:

a.) "Addiction, you have no power except what is in the mind and body of those you have attacked. Jesus has all authority, given by His Father. In Jesus' name, I command you, addiction, to give up your hold on <name of person>. Leave them alone, and never return to them or anyone else."
b.) Reinforce with <name of person> that they are loved by you and by God. Encourage them to receive counseling, medical help, whatever needed to break the cycle of addiction. Picture <name of person> without addiction. Continue to seek what is healthiest for them even if your heart breaks over their condition.

Be persistent in both sides of the two-fold approach – as the last 2,000 years have shown, evil does not give up its hold easily.

Give some examples of where you could fight against evil in the way described above.

Share your examples with others whom you trust.

Day 223: The Life of a Christian

Jesus' path is love and forgiveness, service and sacrifice. It is taking up your own death, your own cross, in imitation of Jesus taking up His death on the cross for you. It is walking through valleys of death and despair, because Jesus has asked you to bring His light there. It is seeing the joy of God's wondrous hand outstretched in healing and restoration. It is dying to self, and resurrecting to God. It is knowing that all things are forms of energy, and seeking the healthiest path forward. It is spiritual and material battle, not against people, but against evil.

It is ongoing conversation with God, through scripture reading, through prayer, through meditation, through encounters in the world.

It is grieving over a person who has succumbed to addiction and died, and rejoicing in the sunrise the next day. It is ingesting God into your very being, having the body and blood of Christ, and finding that becoming more like God means becoming more of yourself. It has the full range of emotions.

It is a life of abundance, not over-abundance. It is a life of plenty, not of excess. It is a life of joy, not necessarily happiness. It is a life where you join Jesus on the cross, and find yourself swept up in His resurrection.

The Christian life is to implement the victory that Jesus won on the cross. It is to change the world.

Are you ready?

Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you.