Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Week 67: Radical

Day 462: Signs of the times

Now when the Pharisees and Sadducees came to test Jesus, they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He said, "When evening comes you say, 'It will be fair weather because the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'It will be stormy today because the sky is red and darkening.' You know how to judge correctly the appearance of the sky, but you cannot evaluate the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." Then he left them and went away. (Matthew 16:1-4)

"Prove it to us!" How many people throughout the ages have yearned for some proof from God? To which Jesus replies: "No. You figure it out. Either believe, or don't believe – but I am not going to give you a 'sign' to justify myself. The 'signs' are already all around you."

What 'signs' are you aware of in your life, that God is real and, Jesus is with you? What was the sign of Jonah that Jesus was referring to?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 463: Yeast

When the disciples went to the other side, they forgot to take bread. "Watch out," Jesus said to them, "beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." So they began to discuss this among themselves, saying, "It is because we brought no bread." When Jesus learned of this, he said, "You who have such little faith! Why are you arguing among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the 5,000, and how many baskets you took up? Or the seven loaves for the 4,000 and how many baskets you took up? How could you not understand that I was not speaking to you about bread? But beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!" Then they understood that he had not told them to be on guard against the yeast in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matthew 16:5-12)

Earlier, Jesus had spoken about yeast:

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of flour until all the dough had risen." (Matthew 13:33)

So… if the kingdom of heaven is like yeast, why is Jesus saying, "beware the yeast"?

Matthew says that the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees was what they taught. How could that act like yeast? What may be the yeast of the kingdom of heaven? What is your yeast? What flavour is your yeast?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 464: Revealed

When Jesus came to the area of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They answered, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "You are blessed, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven! (Matthew 16:13-27)

"You are blessed, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven!

Jesus intentionally did not tell anyone who He was but waited for them to figure it out – and when Peter figured it out, He said, "God, my Father, told you this. Wow – are you ever blessed!"

Why did He wait until people only figured it out when they were open to God?

What an excellent question.

Why did Jesus insist on people knowing who He truly was by them believing, having their hearts open to God and God's ways? What guidance does this give for how we most effectively can 'share the good news'? How will this influence your actions?

Share your thoughts.

Day 465: Wow

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church (assembly / gathering), and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven." Then he instructed his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ. (Matthew 16:18-20)

"Peter, you know who I am. Therefore, on you, Peter, I will found my people. The gates of hell will not stop them. Whatever you decide for earth – that is decided for heaven, My house, as well."

Wow.

Wow.

Wow.

What are gates for? Why would the gates of hell (not heaven!) be important to the people of Christ? According to the decisions we have made, what is heaven like? What decisions are you making in your life so that earth *and* heaven are as Christ wants them to be?

Share with your fellow explorers.

Day 466: From the highest of highs …

From that time on Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and experts in the law, and be killed and on the third day be raised. So Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him: "God forbid, Lord! This must not happen to you!" But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me because you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but on man's." (Matthew 15:21-28)

"God forbid, Lord! This must not happen to you!"

Why not?

Why not what?

Why shouldn't Jesus suffer much pain, be killed in disgrace, and then rise again? Why was Peter so adamant?

Because it meant the end of everything?

That was probably the fear, yes, but there was something more fundamental here. According to the scriptures of the day, the Messiah was to:

a.) Have an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 2:44),
b.) Be the avenging judge (Joel 3:1-21)
c.) Rule the earth with an iron fist (Psalm 2:6-9),
d.) Rule all the nations with glory (Daniel 7:14),
e.) Be the eternal victorious warrior (Psalm 110)

(Note: there are many other references beside what are given here).

How could this all happen if He dies? He's not supposed to die!

So Peter says, "Jesus, may God, your Father, prevent what you are saying will happen. It's not what He told us in scripture!"

And Peter quickly goes from being greatly blessed, to being the stand-in for Satan: "Get behind me, Satan! You are … not setting your mind on God's interests, but on man's.

What were (and are), man's interests?

Umm… victory?

Yes. Often, victory at any cost.

What were (and are) God's interests?

Umm… a communion of love?

Thank you. It can be hard for us to let go of the one for the other.

How can we set aside our own desire for validation, for importance, for “victory” (in whatever format) and replace it with God’s desire for loving communion?

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 467: How to let go

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will find it. For what does it benefit a person if he gains the whole world but forfeits his life? Or what can a person give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done." (Matthew 16:24-27)

"If you truly want to follow me, you must die. Paradoxically, that is how you will find life."

Say what?

Aha! Now it's your turn to 'say what?'!

The only way to replace your desires with God's desire, is to kill your desire. Do not desire victory, of any format. Instead, desire that God's will is done. Loving communion with God and others will not happen if you are focussed on "winning."

As Jesus says, you could win it all – even the entire world – and end up with nothing. If, however, you only pursue God's loving communion, even to the point of losing your very life – you will gain everything. Let "winning" be for others.

How can you give up your desire to "win", and replace it with the desire for loving communion with God and doing what is always healthiest for yourself and others?

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers

Day 468: Rest

Rest, receive nourishment, feed both body and soul. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. Dedicate this day to God. Worship! Fill yourself with Light. 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. Celebrate, Rejoice, Give thanks, talk and walk with God. Be in shalom.