Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

The Journey – Week 38

Walking with Christ

Day 260. The Wounded Healer

I am unhealthy in so many ways. I think of Shalom as almost a mirage – a vision ahead of me in the road which I keep chasing, but as I get closer, it continues to recede. When I think of all the ways I am unhealthy, my heart sinks. I'll never get there. I don't think I am up to doing the previous two week's guidance.

Not through your own efforts, you are correct. All of us are unhealthy in some way. It is only when you realize your unhealthiness that you are truly able to be healed. Only those who admit they are broken can be brought back together. A doctor comes to heal the wounded – and Jesus is the great doctor.

Talk to God about all the ways that you are unhealthy, and all the ways in which you miss the mark of God's holiness. Give all that to Jesus. Ask for His forgiveness and His healing. Now, do it for those who persecute you and those you think of as evil.

Share with God.

Day 261: God and goodness

People sometimes ask, “If God is so good, why is there bad in the world?” or “Why would a loving God send people to hell?” or “Why do I and others do harmful things, and when will it end?” or, “how can I ever get enough ‘brownie-points’ to get into heaven?”

None of us are good enough for God by our actions, thoughts, or words. God is orders of magnitude holier than anything we can comprehend.

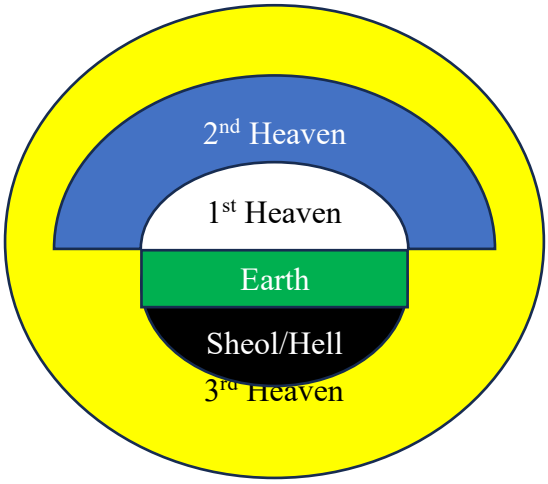
But all of us are accepted by God, made holy and welcomed into His presence, through His sacrifice in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The question isn’t “why do people go to hell?” It’s “why doesn’t EVERYONE go to hell?” And the reason that everyone doesn’t go to hell is that God is determined to invite people into an eternal relationship with Him. His methodology is sacrifice (His own) and forgiveness (yours). Not earning your way in. He invites us to use the same methodology, for that is His Way of Life.

I hope you believe your destiny is to spend eternity with God. The question is, “Why?”

Share as you feel appropriate.

Day 262: A simplified theological understanding of the universe



The authors of the Bible had a different conception of the universe than is commonly depicted in modern times. This is not a physical conception, but rather a spiritual conception which included the physical.

The Earth is what we walk on. The 1st heaven is our atmosphere (Deuteronomy 11:11, Psalm 104:12, Isaiah 55:10). The 2nd heaven is where the stars and planets live (Psalm 8:3, Isaiah 13:10). The 3rd heaven is the spiritual realm (Psalm 33:13-14, Isaiah 66:1, Matthew 6:9, Hebrews 7:26, Revelation 11:19). Sheol is the Old Testament name for the place of the dead, and the original concept was that it was a place apart. Hell is a later concept, emphasizing separation from God and the resulting torment / distress. "Gehenna", translated as hell in some bibles (notably the King James Version) refers to a valley outside Jerusalem where historically child sacrifices had been made (and therefore it was cursed by Jeremiah), and which was a smoldering garbage dump in Jesus' time. Jesus referred to Gehenna as an allegory for divine punishment because of the wickedness of people.

When Paul wrote about "3rd heaven" (2nd Corinthians 12;2-4), he was writing about meeting God in His realm.

The common understanding was that a person was created by God and lived their life on earth. Once they died, their body went to the grave and their spirit went to Sheol (Psalm 6 describes a person pleading with God to save their life, i.e., do not send them to Sheol). At some point in the future, God would raise the righteous from Sheol to live with Him for eternity (i.e., resurrect them).

Jesus introduced a new concept, saying **He** was the resurrection, and the Kingdom of God was near. When He was resurrected Himself, the disciples declared the good news: the kingdom of God had come, proven by Jesus' resurrection, and was open to all who believed and asked for forgiveness. Jesus' resurrection body can go anywhere, and He is truly alive, living in all domains. The bible even says He went down to Sheol to share the good news with those who had died (1st Peter 3:19). The good news is that people can directly live their lives with God, starting today, pursuing goodness and love.

How does the above change your understanding of the universe? How does it help you to understand what the biblical writers were thinking?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 263: The significance

1.) Understanding our fallenness, our unhealthiness, is good. It is realistic, and it is humble.
   a.) We are not God, and we do not have the goodness, the holiness, of God, on our own.
   b.) We all make mistakes, we are all blind to some extent, we do not always understand the healthiest thing to do, and sometimes even when we understand it, we fail to do it.
   c.) We are subject to things outside of our control which can harm us or others. The actions and words we use in harmful circumstances can in turn increase the harm, to us or others.
2.) The understanding in biblical times was that everyone's spirit went to Sheol / Hades once they died. God's realm was separate from the human realm, and while God could intrude on the human realm, the reverse did not happen.
3.) Jesus announced, "I am the Way, I am the resurrection, I am the bread of life, all who believe in Me shall not die but have eternal life."
4.) Jesus' disciples announced, "He is right, and we have experienced it. Jesus makes us holy through His sacrifice, and encourages and guides us in living healthier, doing good and loving others. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God's realm is now open to all who come to Him – with all our fallenness, our unhealthiness, our unworthiness – for eternity. We are changed people, no longer subject to our fallenness, but rather subject to the Way of God."

Jesus's death and resurrection was the fulfillment of many ancient biblical promises. It is proof for the promise that God is transforming the whole of creation and raising His people into new, transformed bodily life (like Jesus' resurrection-body). Those who belong to Jesus have died and been raised in His death and resurrection -- and in His resurrection, they can live the New Life of Christ. They are now free to live today in accordance with the promised ultimate future of all raised from the dead and alive with God in the New Creation.

Your fallenness is crucified with Christ. You are raised in New Life with Him. You are part of the New Creation, where God lives with His people. This is the Good News. Shalom isn't a vision to chase – it is what you are part of. It isn't a sanitized place where nothing goes wrong – it is a place where you can love, and are loved, and God walks with you. That is the promise of God in Christ.

Describe how it feels to be loved more than life itself.

Day 264: The Good News – how to begin?

As shared on day 257, Love is the key, belonging is the key, God is the key.

The Good News is that you are a New Creation. In Christ, you are now a Child of God.

Your old self died with Christ's death. Your new self rose in His resurrection.

So, what to do? If shalom is living in the healthiest way possible, and you are a person of shalom, *and* the world is obviously not a place of shalom, what can you do about it?

I suggest the place to begin is by celebrating. Rejoicing. Giving thanks.

Celebrate that you are born anew. Rejoice that the broken-ness of the world has no dominion over you. Give thanks that in Christ, you are free to live in love. Join with your fellow New Creatures, the body of Christ (the church), in celebrating, rejoicing, and giving thanks.

Focus on this as the underlying culture of your new life: celebration with God, rejoicing with the church, giving thanks to God. Try and do this every day (whether you feel the emotions or not). It is a fragrant offering to God, much pleasing to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

How can you celebrate your new life in Christ today? Write down your rejoicing. What are you giving thanks to God for?

Share with God's fellow New Creatures.

Day 265: The Good News: Step Two

Thanks be to God, God wants to be part of this new life with you. You belong to God, so please, converse with God! Step two is to pray. Talk to God and listen to God. Listen in your readings, listen in observing the world, listen in truly listening to other people, listen in your thoughts … listen in every way you can for God's voice of love, of encouragement, of tenderness, of pleasure. When you see the sunrise, think of the Son-rise in your heart. When you see the stars above, think of the angels around God's throne room, worshiping and rejoicing. Listen, observe, and speak. Speak to God of all that is on your heart – your worries, your joys, your loves, your frustrations. You belong to God – talk with The One you belong to, and encounter His joy, His love, for you. Give thanks for the joy, the beauty, the love which He surrounds you with.

Share how you have encountered God's love for you today.

Share as you feel led.

Day 266: 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. 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, and talk with God.