Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Week 68: The Kingdom of God is near

Day 469: Thy Kingdom Come

"I tell you the truth, there are some standing here who will not experience death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Six days later Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and led them privately up a high mountain. And he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

Then Moses and Elijah also appeared before them, talking with him. So Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you want, I will make three shelters—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my one dear Son, in whom I take great delight. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they were overwhelmed with fear and threw themselves down with their faces to the ground. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Do not be afraid." When they looked up, all they saw was Jesus alone. (Matthew 16:28-17:7)

Remember saying that Jesus not only told parables, He lived them? This is a lived-out parable.

Jesus takes Peter, John, and James up to a mountain top. Moses went up a mountain top, now they go up a mountain top. Jesus was suddenly dazzling white, appearing as the literal light of the world. Moses and Elijah, the bringer of the law and the chief of the prophets (the prophet who is to come back just before the coming of the Son of Man, the anointed one), are talking to Him. They disappear, as the Law and the Prophets are supplanted by the coming of Christ Himself. The Law and the Prophecies – they are all, in the end, about Jesus and our relationship with Him. Peter correctly thinks that this is the inauguration of the end time, the kingdom of God, when the law and the prophets are fulfilled, and his statement to make shelters was asking 'is this the anointed time?' (The festival of booths, which Peter got the idea from, was a week-long commemoration of the Israelites journeying from Egypt to the Promised Land of Israel – and had also become associated with the People of God's final journey into the Promised Land of the New Kingdom. Peter was in effect asking, "are we now in the eternal Promised Land, The time of the triumphal entry of God's kingdom, the re-uniting of heaven and earth?') Peter is right – he IS seeing the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. The answer is 'yes' – and, also: 'but not the way you think, Peter.'

The Holy Spirit overshadows all, in the form of a cloud. And the Father speaks: "This is my one, dear, Son, in whom I take great delight. Listen to Him!" I.e.: 'Yes – this is my anointed one, my Christ, my ruler for all time.' This is the glorious manifestation of God Himself on earth, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is also a repeat of what the Father said in Psalm 2, prophesying this: "You are my son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession."

Peter, John, and James saw Jesus in all His magnificence. We are given the same message that they received: "This is My Son: listen to Him!" The law and the prophets are encapsulated in the Word of God, Jesus the Christ. Today, spend some deliberate time with Him. What does He tell you?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 470: Perception

As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Do not tell anyone about the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." The disciples asked him, "Why then do the experts in the law say that Elijah must come first?" He answered, "Elijah does indeed come first and will restore all things. And I tell you that Elijah has already come. Yet they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wanted. In the same way, the Son of Man will suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist. (Matthew 17:9-13)

Peter had announced Jesus as the Messiah. He, James, and John had seen Jesus transfigured. They knew that He was the promised one that all were looking for. And yet, there were niggling details! "What about Elijah coming first?" (this is taken from the last verse of the prophet Malachi: "Look, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord arrives. He will encourage fathers and their children to return to me, so that I will not come and strike the earth with judgment.")

Jesus says, "Elijah will come and restore all things."

Jesus then says, "Elijah has already come, though He was not recognized but suffered."

Does that mean that all things have been restored? Well, yes and no. Yes, in that the timing was now for the day of the Lord to come – and no, in that the Lord Himself will need to suffer as well.

So much depends on perception. And perception is dependent upon belief.

Do you believe Jesus walks with you? Do you understand that His death was necessary, for Him to live with you? Do you perceive the Kingdom of God around you, so near?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 471: Failure and Disappointment

When they came to the crowd, a man came to him, knelt before him, and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son because he has seizures and suffers terribly, for he often falls into the fire and into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they were not able to heal him." Jesus answered, "You unbelieving and perverse generation! How much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I endure you? Bring him here to me." (Matthew 17:14-17)

After the literal mountain-top experience, the disciples come crashing down, unable to serve as Jesus was. His reaction shows bitter disappointment: "Unbelieving! Perverse! How much longer must I endure you?"

Jesus was possibly not so upset with His disciples as He was with those who sought His healing – the entire generation. They wanted the flash, the fireworks – but they would not believe Who He Was nor What He Was.

His disciples were starting to understand Him, but the world did not. The current generation still struggles with this.

You will meet many who do not believe, who do not understand that Jesus is the Son of God and this is His age. How do you keep yourself encouraged and steadfast in the face of disbelief or even opposition?

Share your thoughts.

Day 472: Faith

Then Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of him, and the boy was healed from that moment. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why couldn't we cast it out?" He told them, "It was because of your little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew 17:18-20)

"If you trust the Father and try to do His will, even against unsurmountable odds, you will be successful."

I think many people have tried this and not been successful, even to losing their lives.

This verse has caused many problems in the past 2,000 years, yes. However, Jesus is encouraging us to not lose faith, not lose trust, but:

a.) Remember that we are loved beyond measure
b.) Remember that we are to love God and others as we love ourselves
c.) Act on that love
d.) Know that God can make wondrous things happen with us.

This does not mean that we shall see success as the world measures success. Jesus' most successful act was to hang on the cross – and from that defeat, mountains did move.

What 'mountains' are in place which are stopping you from living out God's will? Talk to Christ about it and pursue the healthiest path forward.

Share with your fellow explorers.

Day 473: From the highest of highs …

When they gathered together in Galilee, Jesus told them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised." And they became greatly distressed. (Matthew 17:22-23)

The 'sign of Jonah' has been revealed – just as Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish, Jesus will be three days in death. And now the disciples are truly beginning to understand.

They've gone through a rollercoaster – revolutionaries going to remake the world, the darlings of Galilee, people literally throwing themselves at Jesus' feet, all their dreams coming true – and now, they've come to realize that true discipleship does not mean "winning", nor everything going your way – it means persevering, even to death, and beyond. For the path they are on is not towards world domination – if anything, it is towards world servanthood. The joy is in the salvation, not in the personal achievement. It means giving literally everything to God – even themselves.

You are saved, through Christ. Each day has its sorrows and joys, its frustrations and victories – but underneath it all, you are saved, through Christ. This was the energy of the early church – that despite persecution, despite distress and sorrow, despite the many mountains which are to be faced, despite even the possible loss of your very life – you are saved, through Christ.

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 474:

After they arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Your teacher pays the double drachma tax, doesn't he?" He said, "Yes." When Peter came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do earthly kings collect tolls or taxes—from their sons or from foreigners?" After he said, "From foreigners," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. But so that we don't offend them, go to the lake and throw out a hook. Take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth, you will find a four-drachma coin. Take that and give it to them for me and you." (Matthew 17:24-27)

"The sons are free."

Taxation in the Roman Empire was fairly complex, and some taxes applied only to those from out-of-province. The temple tax was a Jewish tax, however, applied for the maintenance of the temple. Jesus is making a rather obscure (at the time) point: the children of God do not pay the price to be in the Temple of God.

He does.

Matthew has recorded many incidents to indicate that Christ is the Messiah, now He is giving foreshadowing of what that truly means. The Christ will pay the fee for the Children of God, for the upkeep of the Temple: His Temple. We are His Temple.

What does it mean, "We are His Temple?"

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers

Day 475: 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.