

Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Week 75: -- Getting to the End

Day 518: The way of death vs the way of life

“Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have participated with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ By saying this you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of your ancestors! You snakes, you offspring of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?” (Matthew 23:29-33)

Do not be a person who tries to make themselves look good to others, while pursuing your own gain at another’s expense. Be humble, not proud; have integrity, not deceit; be truthful, not false. Pursue justice and mercy; pursue love. Don’t just learn your faith; don’t just become an expert in your faith; live it. Live it to the fullest, in communion with God Almighty through Christ; in communion with Christ through the Holy Spirit; in communion with each other through the Holy Spirit.

Love: pursue what is healthiest.

We can be so tempted to pursue putting ourselves above others, or to make ourselves acceptable or “liked” by others – and it is an empty pursuit. People seek to assuage their insecurities through fame, fortune, and force – all empty pursuits, all leading not to life, but death. Write down some ways you, today, have instead of pursuing worldly heights, have pursued heavenly heights: how you have loved; how you have pursued the way of life, the Way of Christ.

Share as you feel led.

Day 519: "Prove it to me..."

"For this reason I am sending you prophets and wise men and experts in the law, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, so that on you will come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, this generation will be held responsible for all these things!" (Matthew 23:34-36)

"You say that you would not be like those who did those terrible things. I will make it so that you can prove it to me; and you will not. Instead, you will prove your guilt."

This seems very harsh. How can Jesus be so sure?

They were rejecting Him. He draws the parallel between them rejecting Him, and rejecting those who God had sent before. And then He tells them, essentially, "I will prove your guilt. You think you know all there is about the Kingdom of God; you know nothing. You think you are holy; you are profane. You think you are life; you are death. The tree is proved by its fruit, in and out of season. You are giving not fruit of love, but fruit of death. I will send you people who you will painfully reject and that will prove my accusation. This generation, this society, is responsible."

This is a scathing accusation.

Jesus was encountering disbelief, hardness of heart, rejection. If we encounter the same, we can comfort ourselves that Christ encountered no less. Pray for Christ to open the door for you, to prepare the ground, to water the field, that you may go in and do His work fruitfully. And yes, expect opposition.

What work do you see that Christ needs doing in your neighbourhood? Pray about it and then follow Him. Write your thoughts down here.

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 520: Abandoned

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would have none of it! Look, your house is left to you desolate! For I tell you, you will not see me from now until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Matthew 23:37-39)

This is perhaps both the most chilling and most hopeful verse in all of scripture.

Really? Why is that?

“... your house is left to you desolate! For I tell you, you will not see me from now until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

Who was (and is) Jesus?

God Incarnate on earth and risen to the heavenly Father.

Correct! So God Incarnate is saying, “You are left desolate. You will not see me until...” In other words, God is letting His people abandon Him, until they return and recognize those who He sends to them, and welcomes them in His name.

They are cut off from relationship with God – it is

“So the Lord God expelled him from the orchard in Eden to cultivate the ground from which he had been taken. When he drove the man out, he placed on the eastern side of the orchard in Eden angelic sentries who used the flame of a whirling sword to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:23-23) all over again.

To be abandoned by the source of all life means that your existence is in death. It is to be damned to hell.

That is bad. Why is this verse also hopeful?

There is great hope! All you need to reverse the condition is to recognize those whom the Lord sends to you; turn from your wickedness, and live. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

There are consequences to the way we live, the way we treat others – and the way we live follows what we believe. Understanding that God created you, wants to walk with you and pursue what is healthiest for all with you gives you a much different life-purpose than believing in an aimless life with no purpose, in which everything is essentially an accident.

How do you nurture your relationship with God? Share some habits you have which keep your relationship with God alive and real.

Share with those you trust.

Day 521: The Temple

“Now as Jesus was going out of the temple courts and walking away, his disciples came to show him the temple buildings. And he said to them, “Do you see all these things? I tell you the truth, not one stone will be left on another. All will be torn down!” (Matthew 24:1-2)

This has nothing to do with a physical temple, really.

What? But I thought the temple was torn down, in 70 A.D.?

Yes, in the Jewish-Roman war. This is true. But through the explorations of this course, what has been referred to as the “temple” of God?

The people of God?

Yes! The people of God. The physical stone temple is just a metaphor for the real temple, the real place where God’s presence may be found: His people (for example, 2nd Corinthians 6:16).

In a way, Jesus is restating what He said yesterday. The old Temple (the old ‘People of God’) will be torn down, will be left desolate. A new temple (a new ‘People of God’) shall come into being in its place. The new temple will be those who recognize God in their midst (God Incarnate).

In the new people of God, the relationship is not “God above / God Most High” (El Elyon), nor “God at a distance” (Elohim me-rachok), (though those are in a way true) – the relationship is “God With Us:” Immanuel. The relationship is with “God Who Saves:” (Yeshua).

The new temple is all those who have a relationship with Immanuel, Jesus.

Jesus wants a very real relationship with you. Jesus wants to be Immanuel for you, every second of your life. What do you need to do to successfully achieve such a relationship?

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 522: Nearing the End Time

“As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, his disciples came to him privately and said, “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” Jesus answered them, “Watch out that no one misleads you. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will mislead many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. Make sure that you are not alarmed, for this must happen, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise up in arms against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these things are the beginning of birth pains.

“Then they will hand you over to be persecuted and will kill you. You will be hated by all the nations because of my name. Then many will be led into sin, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will appear and deceive many, and because lawlessness will increase so much, the love of many will grow cold. But the person who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole inhabited earth as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:3-14)

“There will be much conflict. Many will claim to be the saviour. Be brave, trust God, Love. You will be persecuted and killed. You will be hated. Many will be betrayed, many will be led into sin. Be brave, trust God, Love. People will deceive, lawlessness will spread, love will grow cold. Be brave, trust God, Love. The good news of the kingdom must go to all inhabitants of the world before the end comes.”

Jesus could have been speaking of 35 years later, during the Jewish-Roman war. Or, 1200 years later, during the Mongol invasion of Europe. Or the many wars in Europe in the 14-1700's. Or World War 1. Or World War 2. Or even today. Regardless of the generation we live in, we are asked to endure. Be brave, trust God, pursue what is healthiest. That is what the temple does; that is how it worships God-With-Us, God-Who-Saves. Immanuel. Jesus.

What do you have to be brave about? Where do you need to exercise your trust, your faith, in God? Where is Love needed? Please pray, take note of it here, and then; proceed. God, the God who saves, is with you.

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 523: The End Time

“So when you see the abomination of desolation—spoken about by Daniel the prophet—standing in the holy place” (let the reader understand), “then those in Judea must flee to the mountains. The one on the roof must not come down to take anything out of his house, and the one in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing their babies in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great suffering unlike anything that has happened from the beginning of the world until now, or ever will happen. And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe him. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Remember, I have told you ahead of time. So then, if someone says to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe him. For just like the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so the coming of the Son of Man will be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

“Immediately after the suffering of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man arriving on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet blast, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matthew 24:15-31)

This is getting rather cryptic.

THIS is getting rather cryptic?

Now, now, be nice! Let’s try and break it down. Remember that Jesus loves to speak (and act) in metaphor and parable. The “abomination of desolation:” in Daniel 9:27 is the prophecy, “... on the wing of abominations will come one who destroys...”. So, taking that “standing in the holy place” refers to the temple, or the people of God, it could mean, ‘when a destroyer takes up residence in the people of God....’

Has that ever happened?

Depending on your point of view, you could claim it has happened multiple times – there are always people in the church who are there not for life and health (i.e., love), but to bring destruction and death (i.e., destroy). There are also many in the world who destroy, but claim allegiance to the people of God, for their own ends (usually to hoodwink those they can). Often these people aren’t too prominent, but sometimes they are.

Jesus could be saying that when a destroyer becomes controlling in the people of God, then the people are to flee – and great will be the suffering. For example, when war is engaged.

There will be many imposters who arise, claiming to be Him: the return of Jesus, Immanuel. The true coming, however, will not be able to be missed – great and cataclysmic events will occur in the earth and heavens, and then Jesus will come in His fullness, and gather His people to Him.

So, what do we do in the meantime?

Be brave, trust God, and Love. Be true to Who and Whose we are.

Reflecting on the above, describe the end-time in your own words. Does this motivate or demotivate you in your current life? Why?

Share with your fellow explorers as you feel appropriate.

Day 524: 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. Love. Pursue what is healthiest. Order your life as one pursuing facilitating as many people as possible to find the Kingdom of God. Be brave, trust God, Love.