

Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Week 76: Stay the Course

Day 525: The times, they are a'changin...

“Learn this parable from the fig tree: Whenever its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also you, when you see all these things, know that he is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

“But as for that day and hour no one knows it—not even the angels in heaven—except the Father alone. For just like the days of Noah were, so the coming of the Son of Man will be. For in those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. And they knew nothing until the flood came and took them all away.

“It will be the same at the coming of the Son of Man. Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one left. There will be two women grinding grain with a mill; one will be taken and one left.

“Stay alert because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have been alert and would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

(Matthew 24:32-44)

When the people of the church are being rejected; when the world seems rejecting of, and abandoned by, God; when there are a few stalwarts with a relationship with God-With-Us, God-Who-Saves; when there is much conflict; when there are many claiming to be the saviour of humanity; when a destroyer is misleading the people of God ... then know that the Christ is right at your door. Be alert, be ready, because you do not know, not even Jesus could say, when the hour of His coming would be.

How am I to be ready?

Be brave. Trust God. Love. Invite people into the community of faith, so they can do the same.

If you realize that Christ is always with you, then you cannot be surprised when He finally ‘appears’ – for you will be living alongside Him the whole time, already. The disciplines and practices of our faith are there to help us, in good times and bad, to maintain our bravery, reinforce our trust, and insist on seeking what is healthiest. They have been built up over the centuries as people have recorded what helped them. What practice(s) help you to increase your relationship with God-With-You (Immanuel), God-Who-Saves (Jesus)?

Share how you know Christ is with you each and every day.

Day 526: Stay the course (part 1)

“Who then is the faithful and wise slave, whom the master has put in charge of his household, to give the other slaves their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom the master finds at work when he comes. I tell you the truth, the master will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that evil slave should say to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ and he begins to beat his fellow slaves and to eat and drink with drunkards, then the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not foresee, and will cut him in two, and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 24:45-51)

Stay devoted to the work Christ gives you: Be Brave, Trust, and Love. Be at your work with Him. Don't be a hypocrite, don't lose faith, don't be selfish, don't see fame, fortune, or force – pursue justice and righteousness, and walk humbly with your God.

Give an example where you saw someone who exemplified walking with Christ, even in face of opposition or hardship.

Share your example with your fellow explorers.

Day 527: Stay the course (part 2)

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like 10 virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of the virgins were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish ones took their lamps, they did not take extra olive oil with them. But the wise ones took flasks of olive oil with their lamps. When the bridegroom was delayed a long time, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look, the bridegroom is here! Come out to meet him.’ Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.’ ‘No,’ they replied. ‘There won’t be enough for you and for us. Go instead to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ But while they had gone to buy it, the bridegroom arrived, and those who were ready went inside with him to the wedding banquet. Then the door was shut. Later, the other virgins came too, saying, ‘Lord, lord! Let us in!’ But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I do not know you!’ Therefore stay alert because you do not know the day or the hour.” (Matthew 25:1-13)

Be dedicated. Be steadfast. Don’t give up. Take what you need to help you persevere. It may be a long time ...

It’s been 2,000 years!

True, in elapsed time. But for each person involved, it’s only been their lifetime. It will probably be your lifetime as well. Don’t give up. Be brave, trust God, love.

Share some examples from history where disciples have stayed the course, been brave, trusted, and loved – this could be from the days of the disciples (John, James, ...), early church (Origen, Justin Martyr, Perpetua, ...), later on (Francis of Assisi, Bernard of Clairvaux, Martin of Tours, ...), or today.

Share your findings with your fellow explorers.

Day 528: Stay the course (part 3)

“For it is like a man going on a journey, who summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The one who had received five talents went off right away and put his money to work and gained five more. In the same way, the one who had two gained two more. But the one who had received one talent went out and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money in it. After a long time, the master of those slaves came and settled his accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came and brought five more, saying, ‘Sir, you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ His master answered, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave! You have been faithful in a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.’ The one with the two talents also came and said, ‘Sir, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more.’ His master answered, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave! You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.’ Then the one who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Sir, I knew that you were a hard man, harvesting where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’ But his master answered, ‘Evil and lazy slave! So you knew that I harvest where I didn’t sow and gather where I didn’t scatter? Then you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received my money back with interest! Therefore take the talent from him and give it to the one who has 10. For the one who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough. But the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

And throw that worthless slave into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ (Matthew 25:14-30)

We all have different gifts, we all have different capabilities. God does not ask us to do what He asks of another.

But, He does ask us to use the gifts He has given us to fully represent Him in His creation.

Be brave, trust God, love – use your gifts.

What gifts has God given you? How do you use them to experience and share His love, to further His kingdom, to build up your relationship with Him, just like the examples you’ve noted in the past two days?

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 529: Judgement

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be assembled before him, and he will separate people one from another like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘I tell you the truth, just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it for me.’

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels! For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you did not receive me as a guest, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they too will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not give you whatever you needed?’ Then he will answer them, ‘I tell you the truth, just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me.’ And these will depart into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

(Matthew 25:31-46)

The God-With-Us, the God-Who-Saves, is also *Elohei mishpat*: God of Justice. All will be brought into account, and their actions will judge them – as Jesus said, by your fruit shall you be known. How you treat others – in that same way, you display your version of God to creation. Stay the course. Be brave. Trust God. Love, and insist on loving. Part of that love is to share your understanding of reality with others, so they may change their ways and love as needed. If they are giving fruit of death, pray for them, because their eternal life is in danger. This understanding motivated Jackie Pullinger to travel to Hong Kong and share the good news of Christ, with the result that many became healed from heroin and a life of crime (see ‘Chasing the Dragon’, a recount of her story).

People judge themselves by the actions they do. Our job is to follow Christ and love them like Christ loves, pursuing what is healthiest. There are many ways of pursuing health for others – Jesus gives a small list above. Write down some ways you have pursued health for others, recently.

Share your list with your fellow explorers.

Day 530: Sacrifice

When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he told his disciples, “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people met together in the palace of the high priest, who was named Caiaphas. They planned to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they said, “Not during the feast, so that there won’t be a riot among the people.”
(Matthew 26:1-5)

Jesus has just been repeating, through many parables, the need for us to be steadfast; to stay the course.

And now He references the greatest gift He will give us, if we but have eyes to see and ears to hear: “**the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.**”

As we shall see, He knew this ahead of time, and He worked to ensure it would happen – not because He liked pain or death, but precisely because He hated them both – He was determined to rid the world of evil and death, and this was the way to make it happen.

Be brave, trust God, and Love. Be true to Who and Whose we are. Whether we see Him, or whether we don’t. He sacrificed everything so that we can be successful.

You may walk through dark valleys – Christ walks them with you. You may face death, pain, destruction – Christ faces them with you. Pray for help in your need, as you address the needs of the world around you. Write your prayer here.

Share with your fellow explorers as you feel appropriate.

Day 531: 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.