

**(For Monday, June 26, 2017)?**

*“This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.” (1Sam.5:5, ESV)*

This verse has always struck me as incredibly funny. I have this mental image of these pagan priests in single file making dad-gum sure that they don't step on the threshold leading to the shrine of their idol. It's like not walking under a ladder, or not crossing a black cat's path. Although superstitions have no place in our Christian convictions, there is most certainly a valuable function for some of our worship traditions – **as long as we understand their meaning.** In my church, when we're preparing to participate in the Lord's Supper, many of us bow at the name of Jesus to reflect his Lordship in our lives. When we proclaim our profession of Christian faith with the ancient words of the Nicen Creed, many of us also bow at the profession of the Virgin Birth, to show our thanks for Christ's incarnation.

Are there things you do in your own worship tradition that are special for you? And do you understand the meanings of these traditions?

**(For Tuesday, June 27, 2017) So why is it greener on the other side of the hill?**

*“The Lord has made known his salvation he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.” (Ps.98:2, ESV)*

The Psalter is incredibly Messianic. When the Christian reads this verse from Psalm 98, his/her mind naturally jumps to the Resurrection. For us, that is how God has truly revealed our salvation and righteousness – through the empty tomb. But the Psalter also has to be read with an Old Testament context in mind. Because the author of this Psalm was writing a thousand years before that first Easter Sunday. Yet, through some kind of marvelous moment of revelation, God provided the writer of Psalm 98 the assurance of God's limitless love and remarkable righteousness. Yes, there were Old Testament saints who were inspired to see a vision of God's salvation through special moments of revelation. But for you and me, the revelation of God's grace is complete and freely accessible to all. That is the amazing result of what happened with the events of that bloody hillside outside Jerusalem.

So, you see, it's true. The grass is truly greener, and life is indescribably more marvelous for all of us who live on the far side of that glorious hill!

**(For Wednesday, June 28, 2017) Is your Bible less important than your breakfast?**

*“Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.” (Acts 6:1, ESV)*

In his book *Deacons and the Church*, John Collins interprets this verse very differently from past perceptions of Scripture. According to Collins, the “daily distribution” talked about here had nothing to do with earthly food. Instead, he believes that in Acts 6 Luke is describing the daily teaching and preaching of the faith. For Collins, these first Deacons were ministering the Word of God to that culture's equivalent of our present-day shut-ins, who were not able to attend the worship services at the house churches of the early practitioners of The Way. If Collins is right, not only does this give a very different perspective on the role of Deacons in the Church. It also describes a community where the daily reception of God's word was just as important – perhaps even MORE important – than the provision of bread.

What about you? When you thank God for your “daily bread,” what place does the regular study of God's word have in the daily sustenance of your life?

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**(For Thursday, June 29, 2017) ?**

*“You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Lk.22:28-30, ESV)*

For me, this verse presents both great encouragement and sobering caution. When he promises The Twelve their exalted place in the Heavenly Kingdom, Jesus already knows how fickle they will prove to be in just a few hours' time, both in Gethsemane and then outside the house of Caiphas, the High Priest. Yet, full well knowing their faithlessness, Jesus never-the-less promises them positions of great honor in the Heavenly Kingdom. It would seem that Our Lord concentrates much more on our moments of shining faithfulness than on our dark nights of doubt and sin. That's great good news for any fallen sinner like me! Yet, this also presents a view of heaven that is far from egalitarian. In God's throne-room, apparently there will be those who stand close to God's glory, and there will be those in the “cheap seats.” And when I think of the wondrous things so many of the great Saints have done for God, I'm pretty sure that I will be standing a good way's off, in back of so many others have suffered so much for Our Lord.

Still, I do take heart from another perspective, because just like the Bible says, it's much better to be a door-keeper in My Father's house than to have place of pride in the tents of the wicked. (See Ps.84:10) So, yep, as long as it's God's house, I'll be glad to watch the door! 😊

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**(For Friday, June 30, 2017) Did you know that you and God are on a first-name basis ?**

*“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” (Lk.22:31-32, ESV)*

This verse causes me to shiver. It should! Jesus was apparently not just struggling with Satan during the 40 days after his Baptism. He continued to fight the Evil One all during the entirety of his earthly walk. People who say that the Devil doesn't really exist just have not read Scripture with even a minimal attention-span. In Luke's Greek, the first two uses of the word “you” in this passage are plural. Apparently, it wasn't just Peter that Satan was interested in. But then when Jesus describes his prayer of intercession, the use of “you” becomes singular.

Isn't it amazing that although Satan tries his hardest to corrupt all humanity, God's determination to bring his children to salvation is dispensed with the most focused and loving individual attention!

(Rev. James Barnhill blogs at [www.1thes511.net](http://www.1thes511.net))