

(For Monday, July 3, 2017 – from Propers for Independence Day) Are foreigners welcome?

“Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him...” (Deut.10:19-20a, ESV)

Our love for the “sojourners” among us is evidently connected to our ability to fear (be devoted to) God. By showing our concern for the aliens and the destitute among us, we recognize the abundance of mercy that we have received, especially those of us who are blessed enough to live in this wonderful land of ours. Conversely, by shutting the aliens, the homeless, the addicted out of our lives, no such recognition of just how blessed we are is required. When we remove from our midst the evidence of the broken-ness we all share, God can become just an after-thought, something we try to fit into the cracks of our lives.

Do you welcome the sojourners in your midst?

(For Tuesday, July 4, 2017 -from Propers for Independence Day)

“These [the Old Testament Saints] all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on earth.” (Heb.11:13, ESV)

Hebrews 11:8-16 demonstrates so clearly how we are all sojourners, so ill-equipped to provide for our own freedom. The marvelous irony about fighting for the freedom of this great land is that those who accept this calling are fighting to protect the right to proclaim our weakness. This country was founded upon the belief that from our Creator we have certain inalienable rights. And so, when we fight to preserve our freedom, we fight to preserve the right to profess, proclaim, and serve a God who gives us a victory founded on our ability to understand just how frail we really are. The assurance of our freedom is based on our coming to know just how much we need to be servants to his grace and mercy, if we’re going to be really free.

We are his servants, so that we can be free. What a mighty and marvelous mystery!

(For Wednesday, July 5, 2017)? Is it time for a visit with the heart-doctor?

“And Simon [the Magician] answered, ‘Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.’” (Acts 8:24, ESV)

The reactions of Simon the Magician are indicative of his lack of transformation. First, he wants to buy the presence of the Holy Spirit so that he can have power. (See Acts8:19) And then he asks Peter to pray for him so that he may not suffer the consequences of his evil intentions, even though Peter has just told him that what is really needed here is for Simon to pray himself. (See Acts8:22) Earnest prayer needs to be a regular part of our Christian witness. But while we should certainly be praying for the forgiveness of our own sins as well as interceding for the welfare of others, a central and constant focus of our prayer-life should always be for a transformed, humble, and righteous heart.

What about you? Have you had your Spiritual heart examined lately? Is it time for a check-up?

(For Thursday, July 6, 2017) Which Biblical personage represents you?

“He [Pontius Pilate] released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrections and murder [that is, Barabbas], but he delivered Jesus over to their will.” (Lk.23:25, ESV)

I find that often, the most powerful context for reading the Bible is to place ourselves in the shoes of the villains which Scripture describes. Thus, when I read about the deviousness of the Sanhedrin, of the fickleness of Peter, or the hypocrisy of the scribes I find it most convicting to place myself in the shoes of the perpetrators. When we read this passage about Jesus being handed over to the mob, it's easy to focus on the wickedness of the violent crowd. But it's much more powerful for me to place myself in the shoes of Barabbas. Jesus went to the cross in the place of a no-count, lying, violent man who wasn't really worth anyone's time of day. And the truth is, that worthless, faithless, hypocrite of a human being – well, he's none-other than me.

You see, the truth is, we are all Barabbas.

(For Friday, July 7, 2017) Where does your confidence lie?

“For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?” (Lk.23:31, ESV)

Although most theologians identify Luke 23:28-31 as a prophecy regarding the destruction of Jerusalem by the Flavian Dynasty of Rome in 69/70 AD, for me this is also a comment on human nature. If man in his fallen state can be manipulated to such an extent as to murder the perfect Son of God, how much confidence can we possibly have that, when the chips are down, human charity and social harmony will be enough to pardon and save those of us who are so obviously damaged goods, like you and me? Just exactly how much can be possibly trust to the kindness of strangers, no matter how well-intentioned they seem to be?

Thanks be to God that we have been given as our portion and cup the perfect righteousness and the faith that shall never fail us, even to the end of days!

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