

(For Monday, July 31, 2017) How will you add to your “character creds” today?

“Now then be strong and brave for Saul your master is dead and Judah has anointed me king over them.” (2Sam.2:7, NIV)

This message that David sends to the men of Gibeon upon Saul’s death is intriguing. At his adversary’s death, a more calculating ruler might well have taken advantage of the demoralization of Saul’s troops and attacked them through intrigue and deceptive military strategies. But David sends his opponents a message of encouragement, together with an official declaration that he has been righteously anointed as King of Judah. Saul had practiced every form of treachery in order to eliminate David, but to no avail. Yet through all of this, David insists on staying true to an upright and honorable path, even in the face of tremendous treachery. And it pays off! At the conclusion of this section of the book, we read the following reaction to David’s actions: *“All the people took note [of David’s behavior] and were pleased; indeed everything the king did pleased them.” (2Sam.3:36)*

How will your actions of today impact the value of your character in the eyes of those around you?

(For Tuesday, August 1, 2017) What will your cousins think?

“You have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.” (Ps.61:5b)

One of the things about being God’s child is that we all have ancestors. Some of these are related to us through marriage. There are those who share some of our earthly, biological DNA. But the truth is we are all blood relatives, those of us who “fear [revere and love] The Lord,” since all of God’s children share the blood of the Cross. One amazing characteristic of this paternity is that we can always find plenty of examples of those in our family who have set extraordinary examples for us – that’s truly the most valuable function the great saints of the church perform. But, of course, it works the other way as well; there are always people who will be looking to us as an example of how to be a faithful follower of Our Lord.

How will you provide guidance and example today for those who are seeking confirmation of their blood-relatives in God’s family?

(For Wednesday, August 2, 2017) What’s your world-view of evil?

“She [the slave girl] earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.” (Acts16:15b)

From time to time in the Bible we read pretty clear evidence of the Evil-One at work in the world. This slave girl who told the future through the demonic possession was making a lot of money for her owners. That means she must have been pretty good! As someone who has a reasonably significant history in ministry, I’ve experienced numerous occasions where Satan’s presence has been evidenced. And yes, Satan’s methods really do work. But those who choose to be in the employ of Evil pay a terrible price. C.S. Lewis famously said that Christians should neither assume the Evil One to be a myth, nor become obsessed with his possible presence among us, for Satan is quite happy with either such outcome. Instead, the best practice a Christian can adopt to oppose Evil in this world is to steer a middle ground – to have a healthy respect for it, along with the convictions to put our faith and trust in The Lord who has vanquished it.

What about you? How do you approach Evil in this world?

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(For Thursday, August 3, 2017) Been through the wringer lately?

“You leave the commandment of God and honor the tradition of men.” (Mk.7:8, ESV)

In the Jerusalem of Jesus’ day the movers and shakers had abandoned the real objective of the Law of Moses (much of which was to protect the interests of the most vulnerable in society). The Pharisaical and Sadducaical parties were perpetuating a legalistic system in order to enhance and preserve their own interests. I often find it instructive to place myself in the shoes of these hypocrites in order to understand how Scripture might be convicting my own habits and behaviors. But another level of meaning in this verse revolves around the concept of “honor.” If God’s incarnation in Jesus Christ was manifest in order to bring once-and-for-all a clear distinction between the brokenness of this world, and the complete holiness to which God’s people are called (See Mt.10:34), then the great saints of the church can never truly hope to be honored and lauded by the selfish and self-centered traditions of our secular culture.

Have you been unjustly criticized or condemned lately? Don’t worry. For a Christian, it really just comes with the territory...Oh, but if you want some encouragement, read the last two verses of The Beatitudes (Mt.5:11-12). That’ll cheer you up!

(For Friday, August 4, 2017) Are you in touch with your humble side?

“But she [the Syrophoenician woman with the demon-possessed child] answered him, ‘Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.’” (Mk.7:28, ESV)

This statement by the Syrophoenician woman with the demon-possessed daughter echoes the Prayer of Humble Access from Rite 1 in the Episcopal Eucharist (and which we have preserved in our congregation on Sunday mornings). It is very dear to me. The concept illustrates the essential place of humility in the life of the redeemed. Since the rise of Humanism, man has persisted in pursuing a rather exalted image of himself. And while we are indeed “fearfully and wonderfully made,” (Ps.139:14) it is still by the hand of the Creator God that we came into being. There is an inverse correlation between the exalted view we have of ourselves and the clarity with which we see the hand of God at work in our lives. Any sense of entitlement will necessarily impede our ability to walk hand-in-hand with The Lord. His grace is unmerited; his mercy undeserved. And yet He loves us still.

Are you in touch with your profound sense of humility where The Lord is concerned? Because in order to grasp hold of God, you have to come to him with absolutely empty hands.

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