

(For Monday, January 16, 2017) **Do you REALLY understand your purpose on this earth?**

“I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you.” (Is.44:22, ESV)

This verse actually encapsulates the entire reason for man’s creation and redemption. In Seminary, one of the things that stuck with me was something our Greek Exegesis professor said: “What you need to realize is that the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus was simply the backdrop to God’s main purpose of establishing His Church.” By this, Dr. Rodney Whitacre meant “Church” in its broadest sense – the people and the community of God. We were all created, and then God sent His son Jesus to death and Resurrection just so He could have our company for eternity. Any other calling, or relationship, or objectives that we have in this life MUST be secondary to the main activity of the Christian man or woman which is simply to **be** with God, now and then later on in eternity.

So, are you keeping the main thing the main thing? Because there’s NOTHING more important you can do in this life, and no greater purpose.

(For Tuesday, January 17, 2017) **Are you taking full advantage of your Spiritual premises?**

“O LORD, I love the habitation of your house, and the place where your glory dwells.” (Ps.26:8 ESV)

Ever since we built our home near St. Mary’s, Georgia my wife Donna and I have become such terrible home-bodies! When we get here after days on the road for her work or mine, we generally hunker down and don’t go out, except when trips to the grocery store become unavoidable. The house sits on a parcel of land near the Crooked River, nestled among the live oak trees and Spanish moss. There’s a sense of healing and peace here which we’ve rarely found elsewhere. Dwelling in the Spiritual home of God is quite similar, really. For the Christian man or woman, dwelling in the midst of God’s will brings with it a sense of peace and calm this world simply cannot provide. (See Jn.14:27) And one of the great blessings of this kind of “living space” is that you get to take it with you wherever you go.

Have you been taking time to fully experience the peace that the habitation of The Lord provides?

(For Wednesday, January 18, 2017) **What sort of wake will your voyage through this world leave?**

“And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Eph.5:2 – ESV)

I had some out-patient surgery this week. The surgeon used a laser to burn away a thin layer of epidermal. He mentioned that the only person to experience a problem with the resulting odor had been a Vet, who had undergone some horrible things involving white phosphorous bombs. Smell is the sense which I find calls to mind most powerfully past experiences, both the pleasant and the unpleasant ones. And God obviously finds importance in fragrance. When He established the various Temple sacrifices in the book of Leviticus, Moses frequently noted how important a “pleasing odor of sacrifice” was to The Lord, once the offering had been consumed in holy fire. (See Lev. 1:9,13; 2:2; 28:13) It’s intriguing to think that God is especially pleased with what remains of his children **after** their passage through this mortal life is complete.

What sort of pleasing aroma will linger in testament to your life when your work here is done?

Meanwhile we've all got some growing-up to do.

(For Thursday, January 19, 2017) **Are your eyes seeing, and your ears hearing?**

"For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." (Mk.4:25 – ESV)

Jesus' statement seems a bit heartless until you consider its context. Just beforehand, He assures us that "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you" (Mk.4:23b) Those who earnestly embrace the Gospel inevitably enjoy the full measure of God's blessing, at a level which extends far beyond the kindness we show others. Conversely, those who reject it not only forgo God's immeasurable grace; they will also continue to live with eyes that cannot see the abundance of God's love, and ears that cannot hear the tender call of His Saints and Angels. So, even the first fruits of faith's infancy will be taken from these deniers, as they leave what they so mistakenly name this "Vale of Tears."

The longer I work in the God business, the more I come to believe that God doesn't really need to condemn nonbelievers. No, they do a great job of condemning themselves.

(For Friday, January 20, 2016) **Are you taking full advantage of your adversities?**

"Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles?'" (Is.45:9)

I've been reading Will Durant's *The History of Philosophy*. I'm intrigued at how self-centered so much of philosophy seems. Perhaps that's what happens when you study the universe from a purely personal viewpoint. But, we Christians place God at the center of our lives, as sovereign Lord of this universe. Further, if he is truly omnipotent and omniscient, then He has a loving purpose for everything. And, you don't get to cherry-pick theology, you know. If we truly believe in an all-loving God, then the next time you hit a bump in the road, it's no good crying out, "How could you let this happen?!" At least, not if you really believe that God loves you enough to send His Son to die for you.

So, perhaps the next time you find yourself in a place of pain, the more productive question might be, "Father, I know you love me. So, in your time, would you please reveal to me what I'm supposed to gain from the challenges of this present adversity?"