

(For Monday, April 17, 2017) Is God trying to get your attention?

"...At the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit ,O LORD my God." (Jon.2:6, ESV)

This is the third time in *Jonah* that we hear of the prophet "going down" to somewhere. First, he went down to Joppa, running directly in the opposite direction from what God had commanded. (See Jon.1:3) And then, during the storm we read that he had gone down to the innermost parts of the ship. (See v.1:5) But in Jon.2:6, Jonah realizes that in fleeing from God he has brought himself to utter hopelessness, there in the belly of the fish on the ocean's bottom. And so, having reached a point of complete despair he does the first intelligent thing in the account of his activities – he prays. (See Jon.1:7)

How often does God allow his children to arrive at moments of desperation, just so He can get us to talk with Him?

(For Tuesday, April 18, 2017) What sort of training is your soul going through?

"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" (Ps.1-3:1,ESV)

This single ancient verse from the Psalter could easily be the Summary of Catechism for the Christian man or woman. The concept of "blessing" someone is an easy one to grasp. At my church, we tell visitors that they "bless us" with their presence when they spend a portion of their Sunday with us worshipping God. When we consider the abundance of joy in a particular celebration or anniversary, it is easy to understand that in such instances we are "blessed." Why, we even say "Bless you!" When someone sneezes! Then, is it really so difficult to believe that you and I are Spiritually inhabited by a mystical being called "soul" whose chief aim is to prepare in this life for an eternity of praising, worshipping and glorifying God in a manner truly pleasing to Him, and will bless him forever?

Could this present life just be a kind of "boot camp" for the human soul to prepare and equip itself for an eternity of blessing God?

(For Wednesday, April 19, 2017) Do you celebrate your healing?

"And leaping up, he [the lame man Peter healed] stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God." (Acts 3:8, ESV)

When I was a child, my family used to go camping in the desert southwestern US. I became fascinated with the Mexican jumping-bean. How could something like a bean-seed jump around like that?¹ Why, I thought, there must be something very special inside, to bring that kind of thrill to a dried up old bean. That's a wonderful analogy to the Christian life. You and I are really little more than dried-up husks without the abundant life given us through Christ.

Since we have been healed from death itself, shouldn't we be the kind of joyous people who exhibit a thrilling life of celebration, so that everyone we encounter will think that we too have something very special inside?

¹In fact, these seed pods that have become home to the larva of a moth (*Cydia deshaisiana*) causing the bean to "jump."

(For Thursday, April 20, 2017) **Who's got your back?**

"He [John the Baptist] said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come?" (Lk.3:7, ESV)

While Luke quotes Matthew verbatim here, in the earlier gospel only the Pharisees and Sadducees are called a "brood of vipers" by John the Baptist (See Mt.3:7), presumably because John knew of their hypocrisy. In Luke's account, why would John direct this disparaging term at **everyone** who came out to be baptized? Surely there were some people at the Jordan that day who were sincere in repenting of their sins. Could it be that John's key meaning is focused on the second half of this verse, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come?" There are times in this life when something inexplicable happens that causes us to change our plans, and in so doing avoid what could have otherwise been a catastrophe. Have you ever turned down a job offer, only to realize that it would have been disastrous had you accepted it? Have you ever refused to join some club or organization, and later be thankful that you are not associated with them because of some embarrassing revelation about that particular group?

When we unexplainably avoid a disastrous situation simply because that "little voice in our head" was sounding a warning, do we stop to think about who is it that has our backs?

(For Friday, April 21, 2017) **Just what does humility mean to you?**

"John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." (Lk.3:16a, ESV)

John the Baptist is one of the most faithful people recounted in the Bible. Here he proclaims to all how unworthy he himself is to receive the honor due Jesus. This is clearly honest modesty. What differentiates this kind of modesty from the simpering, false modesty we so often witness? How do you recognize genuine humility and distinguish it from that of those people who proclaim their own unworthiness but are really seeking attention and approbation? I think it has to do with commitment. John knew he was walking on thin ice with his ministry. He was already in hot water for having criticized Herod for marrying his brother's wife (See Luk3:19-20). By demanding repentance and amendment of life, John would only add fuel to Herod's fiery anger against him. But John was willing to walk the walk as well as talk the talk.

In your own life, when you make a statement which identifies you as a humble Christian giving all the glory to God, do you stand ready to back up what you say with acts of genuine humility?