

(For Monday, August 21, 2017) Do you give enough weight to wisdom over pride?

“So we shall come upon him in some place where he is to be found, and we shall light upon him as the dew falls on the ground, and of him and all the men with him not one will be left.”

(2Sam.17:12, ESV)

The speech pattern with which by Hushai the Archite counsels Absalom is flowery and flattering. And this method eventually wins over Absalom, against the wise counsel of his proven advisor Ahithophel. Had Absalom followed the guidance of this-true-and true advisor he would probably have defeated the armies of David who truly were, at this point, “weary and discouraged” from their previous forced marches and exertions.(See 2Sam.17:2) But in his pride, Absalom gives greater weight to the flattery of Hushai than the wisdom of Ahithophel.

How often in our daily activities do we give greater weight to the things which are pleasing, than to those which are wise?

(For Tuesday, August 22, 2017) Are you glad to be in God’s house?

“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’” (Ps.121:1, ESV)

Although the Psalter was composed some 3,000 years ago, so much of it resonates with powerful meaning today. This Psalm subtitled a “Psalm of Ascents” speaks of the joy that arrives when the long-anticipated event of standing in the Temple in Jerusalem, and entering into the presence of The Lord finally comes to pass. As Christians, we should experience this same kind of joy when we arrive at the house of Our Lord on Sunday mornings. It is a privilege and a blessing denied to so many in our world, yet so often we treat this moment of entering our place of Sunday worship with a kind of blasé apathy (if we have even bothered to get up and go to church at all). It’s more than a little pathetic, if you stop and think about it even for a moment.

What about you? Are you sufficiently joyous and grateful when you cross the threshold of your church on Sunday morning?

(For Wednesday, August 23, 2017) Do your words and actions convey the integrity of your faith?

“And they [the Pharisees and Herodians] came to him and said, ‘Teacher we know that you are true and do not care about anyone’s opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?’” (Mk.12:14)

This verse reveals so much about the brokenness of man. First there is the coming together of the Pharisees and the Herodians which is so suspicious. These two groups pursued competing political objectives in the Nation of Israel, so their banding together leads to deep suspicions regarding their real motives. And then there is their acclamation and praise of Jesus. If they really thought he was a righteous teacher of God, this begs the question as to why they so strongly objected to him. The lack of integrity in their actions, and the absence of consistency in their speech condemn these scoundrels before they can even ask their question. The very next verse so accurately describes these villains as hypocrites!

What do your speech and action say about your integrity and your faithfulness to the convictions you profess?

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(For Thursday, August 24, 2017) Is your treasure where your heart is?

“Now, after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings.” (Acts24:17, ESV)

I am old enough to remember “Deep Throat’s” instructions to “Follow the money,” which eventually lead to the Watergate Scandal. The mention of Paul’s alms-giving in Acts Chapter 24 is the 4th time that Scripture recounts his having raised funds for the Christian community in Jerusalem. (See also 1Cor.16:1-4 and Acts20:4; 2Cor. 8-9; Rom.15:25-33 and Acts 20:3) Isn’t it interesting that this action of collecting money would immediately precede Paul’s arrest and imprisonment? Whenever one person or group is given wealth, there is always the creeping presence of resentment in those who do not participate in the windfall. Jesus’ statement that “money is the root of all kinds of evil” (1Tim.6:10) is just as true today as it was in Christ’ time walking among us. And I find that one of the most insidious things about lucre is that the false sense of stability that “financial security” is **supposed** to bring about, is both illusive and a deception. In order to feel really secure, there seems to be the constant struggle to gain “just a little more.” And then, in a heart-beat (or in the lack of one) all of that “security” can disappear like so much snow on a sunny winter afternoon.

How much of your own security is focused on worldly wealth rather than “treasure stored up in heaven”?

(For Friday, August 25, 2017) Do you understand what salvation cost?

“And he called his disciples to him and said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you this poor widow [who put two copper coins into the temple treasury] has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.’” (Mk.12:43, ESV)

I love this verse because it demonstrates a theological principle of which I have grown so very fond in recent years. And it is this: the value of a thing is in its cost, not its price. This means there is no such thing as “cheap grace.” Ah, but this therefore means that you and I are called to sacrifice; called to remorse for our wrongs; to repentance for our sins; to amendment of life, that **real** change which can only come about by letting go of so much we thought was important. And the sobering news is this: There can be no true love without real pain. For it is in the crucible of pain that love is born. Love, the limitless love of The Christ is the final deliverer from sin and death. But we can only walk into eternity with Jesus after we have walked through the valley of the shadow of death and come to know it for that dark, treacherous place of pain that it really is.

So, what about you? Have you come to admit the frightful cost with which your salvation was won? And are you willing to foot your portion of the bill in order to feast at His table?

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