

379 An Engine and a Bus

We considered in last week's Reflection that the Lord God is using the havoc caused by this Covid-19 virus to "shake the trees" globally. He is obliging everyone, everywhere, to "stop, look and listen" in terms of what matters, and what doesn't matter. In our Christian "stopping, looking and listening" we do well to go back to the basics, involving God, me, us, and the world.

First and foremost is the "God and me" relationship, for all else in our individual lives flows from that. This relationship between Almighty God and the individual is "the engine of the bus". If the engine is sound, all is well, but if the engine is useless, so too is the rest of the bus; hence Jesus' words, "I am the vine, ye are the branches ... without me ye can do nothing" (John 15.5, KJV).

Thanks be to God, we are all familiar with the wonderful Good News that is the Christian Gospel, so just these few words here can suffice by way of reminder. Jesus Christ is the unique, God-given, one-and-only "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1.29, 34 / John 14.6 / Acts 4.10-12 / I Timothy 2.4-6). In His own sinlessness Jesus has indeed taken on to Himself all our sins, shedding His innocent blood on our behalf, in our place. He didn't have to do this and in His humanity He didn't want to do this, but He went through all those horrors in loving obedience to His Father's gracious will (Luke 22.39-46 and parallels). Jesus' journey to Golgotha started a few days earlier with His joyful entry into Jerusalem, particularly in our minds at this time; but how quickly things changed.

Jesus' sinless sacrifice was the only way that the gulf between Almighty God, in His holiness and righteousness, and humanity, in our fallenness and sinfulness, could be bridged (Genesis 3.1-24). Praise God, that gulf has been bridged, is bridged, and the Bridge is Christ and Christ alone (eg., Romans 3.21-26). The way is open, for any who so wish, to cross that Bridge (eg., Matthew 7.13-14 & 11.28-30). So, in our current, Covid-19 inspired "stopping, looking and listening", make quite sure that you, you yourself, yes, you! - and never mind anyone else for the moment - have crossed that Bridge! Using our other picture, make quite sure that the Engine of the bus of your life is the Christ-Engine, which, and Who, then enables the bus to be - a proper, effective, bus.

Our individual acceptance of the extraordinary mercy of God our Father, through the gift of His Son Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy

Spirit, is by a simple step of belief: belief that the Bible really is “God’s Word written”; that its contents are therefore true and trustworthy; and that therefore, best of all, “Jesus Christ is Lord”, with all that that plain, glorious truth involves! See for example John 3.14-18, 35-36, and Romans 10.8-13.

This act of faith in Jesus, with our acceptance of His Lordship over our individual lives, involves that “new birth” which Jesus explained to Nicodemus (John 3.1-21). The essence of this new birth, which Nicodemus so struggled with, is that “peace with God”, and a life to match, can never be achieved from our side, by human effort, wisdom or goodness. Once we “get this”, the whole gospel suddenly makes far more sense! - I can’t get there by myself, but God has got me there, through His Son Jesus Christ. Indeed, God the Father is standing on the far side of the Bridge, (just like that father watching for the return of his profligate son, Luke 15.20), announcing, “All things are ready, come unto the marriage” (Matthew 22.4).

As we come, so then all the blessings flow, fully and undeservedly. In Ephesians 1.1-14, and Romans Chapters 5 and 8, we see them spelt out in no uncertain terms!

Above all, in these strange and unprecedented times, we know that by faith in Christ we are at peace with God, with all that that involves, right here, right now, right always, including right through physical death, as and when that physical death may come.

So we now come afresh to Christ, be it for the first time (and just ask someone for help over this if you are unsure of where you stand in this matter), or for the thousandth time; and then resting in that assurance, we worship, pray and serve, as those branches in the Christ-Vine.

In John Chapter 11.20-27, we read how Jesus met Martha that day outside the village, after Lazarus’ death. He assured her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”.

That little question remains the most important question in the world. Please God, may you and I, along with Martha and the rest of us, respond just as she did - with the right answer!