Evening Devotion for Monday before Easter - 21 March 2016, Anno Domini



*15 If ye love me, keep my commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. 18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. 20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. 21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. 22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? 23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. 24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. 25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. 26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. 27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. 28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. 30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. 31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence*. (John 14:15-31)

        There is a pervasive sorrow attending the observance of Holy Week, but the overriding characteristic is that of unmitigated Love. The stripes of Christ were painful, the crown of thorns excruciating, the nails of the Cross and His suspension there were of greater suffering than we can comprehend, the humiliation of hanging naked for all to see of One whose virtue knew only modesty was near to unbearable even for the Son of God – but bear the shame of the cross He did! Every indignity would pass when He surrendered His valiant Spirit with the Eternity-altering words: “***It is finished***!” But there was something else that did not pass with those words or with the bursting of the Most Noble Heart that ever beat – that ‘something else’ was the **pure and unadulterated LOVE of Christ for His own**. The Love of Christ is the one possession we can have that survives death and the grave. Is it possible that we may be separated from that Love? ***Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord***. (Romans 8:35-39) So we learn that the kind of Love that Christ imparts will truly transcend death. It is stronger by far!

*15****If ye love me, keep my commandments****.* The vows offered by the woman from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England expresses, symbolically, that same love and obedience we should bear for our Savior as the Bride of Christ: *Wilt thou* ***obey him****, and serve him,* ***love****, honour, and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him?* Perfect obedience in heart, mind and action cannot exist apart from Love. The son or daughter who best obeys and honors their parent is the same who loves most. Love is the ingredient that evokes the strong desire to please through obedience, and not to bring dishonor and shame upon the object of our love through disobedience. Those Commandments God gave, written by His very Finger, on Tables of Stone proved beyond man’s capability to obey. But those laws, written in the soft sinews of our heart, are enforced and sustained by love. If we have the love of Christ abiding in our hearts, we shall not sin against God. ***Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart***. (Prov 7:3) Obedience is the currency of love.

*16****And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever***. Christ is our strength and our Comfort. But there is another Comforter of which He speaks which shall come into our hearts and always point to Christ and constantly remind us of Him. That Comforter is the Holy Ghost! There are some strange new phenomena these days among churches that proclaim themselves to be Holy Spirit churches. If you hear that claim, you can be certain that such churches are definitely NOT Holy Spirit churches for the Holy Ghost will not speak of Himself, but point always to Christ. (John 14:27)

***neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you****.* Truly, the world’s media, the world’s politicians, the world’s churches, the world’s educators - none of the world – can receive the Spirit of Truth. They will mount the rooftops to believe a lie when they could remain upon the ground and believe the Truth. A wolf does not know the meaning of love or kindness for sheep – that is the nature of the beast. The world is populated by wolves. They hunger only for the flesh of the lambs of God, and cannot receive the truth of their own depravity. If we possess the nature of lambs and not wolves, then we will know the Good Shepherd and be known of Him. It is not enough to know His name only, or His historical remains. We must know that Heart that is so possessed of Love that it was willing to give the last measure of devotion for us. *18****I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you****.* Christ will come to us and abide with us through the agency of the Holy Ghost. Remember the formula we gave of the Trinity? 1x1x1=1 or, 1(God the Father) times 1(God the Son) times 1 (the Holy Ghost) = 1 (the Godhead). Each member is part of the other and of the same will and purpose.

*19****Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also****.* After the death of Christ, no unbeliever was privileged to see Him – only to those of faith did He appear in His resurrection body.  Christ makes reference as well to the privilege of resurrection to life of those who believe and love Him.

*20****At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you****.* The coals of a fireplace abide in the flames of fire, but the flames of fire as well abide in the coals. Can the fire be separated from the coals, or the red-hot coals separated from the fire? If we abide in Christ, and Christ abides in the Father, do we not, as well, abide in the Father and the Son? Christ abides in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit abides in the Father, and all alike abide together. Do we not, consequently, abide in the Trinity of God if we abide in Christ? We cannot be One with Christ and remain apart from the other members of the Trinity.

*21****He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him****.* There is some implication here involving the Love of God which should be disturbing to the ‘Brotherhood of Man’ crowd. The only brother I know on earth is my brother in Christ. If a man is not in Christ, he cannot be my brother. God loves His sons and daughters, but not all on earth belong to that family. There are, in summary, only two families on earth – those belonging to God the Father, and those belonging to the Prince of Darkness.

*22****Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world****?* In His generosity, the Holy Ghost draws a line of difference between the treasonous Judas and this disciple. Judas wonders how it is possible that Christ may appear unto them and not be seen by the world. It is so apparent to the believer today. There are many who profess the name of Christ (Christian) but know or see no evidence at all of His love and grandeur, His Lordship or Sovereignty, in their lives. I know with certainty that Christ is by my side even as I write. What man of the lost world has the slightest idea of this truth? In our Anglican worship, we place Christ at the center of our worship knowing that “***where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them***.” Our pulpits are moved to the Gospel-side of the Lord’s Table, and the Lord’s Table occupies the central point of our worship for it is representative of the place of God. This is contrary to most churches that place man at the center of worship.

*23* ***Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him****.* Again we see the promise of cohabitation with Christ together with the Father if we hide His Words in our hearts. Christ never enters our hearts as a guest only, but He comes to ABIDE there – to live there forever. Does this not give a great measure of joy to your heart?

*24****He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me****.* Christ came not to judge but to save. Those who may even feign a love of Christ cannot bear up under the test of true obedience. They do not love the Word, and they do not love its Author. If one does not love Christ, how can he love another as Christ commands? Such a one is lost by his own hand and according to the judgment of God.

*25****These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you****.* Christ could not reveal all things to His disciples for they were incapable of bearing it. Even after informing them of events soon to transpire regarding His crucifixion, death, and resurrection they could not grasp. But He informs them of mysteries now which shall become plain to their understanding later. He does the same to us. A person being confirmed does not comprehend the same mysteries of God and His Word that a seasoned Christian of mature years.

*26****But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you****.* Please remember that the Holy Spirit does NOT come in His own name, but the name of Christ. His whole purpose is not to cause us to speak in gibberish, or to role in the isles of the church, but to teach all things, and bring to our remembrance, all things spoken by the Christ in His Word. There are churches today, mostly charismatic, in which the name of Christ is seldom mentioned, the crowd preferring instead to presumably worship the Holy Ghost. Those who do so have not heard the reminders of the Holy Ghost and His continual pointing to Christ our Lord. How shall the Holy Ghost bring to our ‘remembrance’ the Words of Christ which we have not even read?

*27****Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid****.* The New Testament is a living will to us. It expresses the will of God for our lives, and the last will and testament of Christ for His people. He did not leave us a new car, a palatial and earthly estate, but He left us peace of mind, and peace of heart born out of the redemption He bought and paid for with His blood on the cross. Such peace is not subject to environmental factors, but to a rest of the heart that cannot be purchased with money.

*28****Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I****.* Do we mourn at the passing of a loved one in Christ? If so, why? Do we truly believe that to be absent in the body is to be present with God? It is more likely that we do not mourn the present abode of the dead in Christ, but we mourn our pitiful plight without their comforting counsel and fellowship. The tears are shed for us and not them. If we love Christ, we will understand that He died for us out of Love, and that He shall return again to take us to be with Him forever. The disciples did not yet understand this, but would soon understand under the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

*29****And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe****.* There is much of prophecy that may escape our understanding today, but as it comes to pass, we may wonder why we did not see it before. Christ has told the disciples much that they did not presently understand, but as the events of Holy Week and Easter unfold, their understanding will be drawn to light. There is much that we study in scripture that escapes our present understanding, but as we read and study more and more, God will illumine the beauty of His Word to our understanding. Have you experienced this?

*30****Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me****.* During His ministry, Christ has taught and preached tirelessly for long hours of every day and night, but now comes the great and terminal conflict of the ages. He has taught all that they are able to bear for the time being. Events are closing rapidly on the event that will shatter the Dark Powers of Hell, and split the dimension of Time, and interrupt Eternity in a moment. The victory has been won from before the foundation of the world, but the victory must be consummated by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The legions and lancers of the enemy of every man’s soul was drawing near in time and distance to the great contest – even at the Garden’s gate. But there was nothing in Christ which could, or would, respond to the temptations of that evil Malefactor. The Devil’s price of thirty pieces of silver had been paid into the hand of his choice traitor. The dye was cast.

**31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.** These words of Christ are intended to inform us that He goes by His own will and that of the Father, and not that of compulsion, to the cross. It is the ultimate evidence of His love for the father, but also for us. This last command to arise is possibly given in the Upper room for those present to depart for Gethsemane – the final Garden of Prayer of our Beloved Lord. Because we are Christ’s, we, too, must come to our own Gethsemane’s. There are sacrifices and disappointments which attend the Christian walk, and we must be reminded of the great Psalmists words: “…..***weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning***.” (Psalms 30:5) The crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of Christ proved the Psalmist’s words.

        Have you faced your Gethsemanes?

        If not, perhaps you have not attended to counsel of Christ.