

PRAISE INTERNATIONAL
A WOVEN MYSTERY
ROMANS 8:28-29

Good Morning

Prayer Needs - Ordination August 20 Jack Morris

On our recent trip Denise and I had the opportunity to see the largest historical set of Tapestries in the world at the St Johns Co-Cathedral in Valletta Malta. They had just been hung for the first time in over 30 years and following a 16 year restoration process - we learned that people came from around the world just to see these amazing tapestries that are now over 400 years old. Tapestries that were all intended to tell a story - in this case the story of Christ. Last month they were taken down and moved to be put on display where they would hung and experience the wear of hanging on display. They were a sight to take in - especially since they had been restored.

Tapestries can look stunning in the as they invite us to see something in fabric and picture a story (slide of ram) if I saw this in a church I would almost certainly think of Abraham offering his son Isaac and how God provided the Ram.

Now the interesting thing about tapestries is that often times the back of them can be not just fuzzy to discern but downright impossible to see what is on the other side - (slide of back of Ram) actually it resembles a tangled mess...which interestingly might be a better picture of our lives many times - as we walk in the midst of what feels like a mess of unconnected challenges.

The back side often looks more like a mystery...and isn't that what our lives can often feel like?

A collection of random events some disruptive, some painful, some so difficult that it seems like the best out come would be to forget it ever happened. One of my boys asked me a question on my birthday - Dad can you tell us one thing you have learned over your 81 years - one for every twenty. Yes he knew I was only 61 but it was his way of poking at me. Then I thought yes I could - so what are things you learned from each 20 years Dad? So while my other kids were correcting his math - I thought and the first thing I said was this; The first thing I would say is that things are never as bad as they seem...

I suppose its something that has found its way deep into my psyche as I listened to the stories of my parents who had lived through depression and a world war and then immigrated to two countries. It is something I frequently hear my wife needing to remind me and me needing to remind myself - I can be tend to be the guy waiting for the 'shoe to drop'.

To be clear I have had a lot of things that have kept me awake at night - unexpected loss's, mistakes - missed steps - yet I would say with this many decades of a life of faith - Nothing is as bad as it seems. Not to diminish pain but to acknowledge that I have learned God knows how to take even my worst and turn it to good - He is a good re cyler - pain redeemed, hope restored and nothing or no one beyond His reach - this is deeply tied to my faith in the promise of the good news of the gospel found in todays epistle.

- God causes all things to work together so that we will be able to agree with Paul's statement to the church in Ephesus in Ephesians 3:10...*His intent was that now through the church the manifold wisdom of God would be made known to rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms...so unpack that for a moment.*

God is weaving a picture of His Love, Mercy and Grace into the real lives of men and women in real time that will cause us according to Revelation 4-5 stand in awe at the tapestry of His Grace!

And the secret is simply this Christ in you!
Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.
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Oh but how often it can feel otherwise - boring, disconnected and at times indescribably difficult. Julian was born in 1343 at the age of 6 the Black plague arrives and returns in waves to her country of England and her village of Norwich leaving her a widowed who by her later writings had also been a mother who had lost her entire family - then she fell ill alone and on May 8 of 1373 after she lost her vision and the feeling of her limbs she was given last rites. The last thing she saw before losing her vision was a crucifix hung above the foot of her bed. 5 days later she recovered and began to write about a series of visions of Christ - that would become the first book written by a woman in English in 1670, Revelations of Divine Love.

In her 13th vision the daunting question that had plagued her mind and heart was simple - if only. If only sin had not been...we should all be clean and like our Lord and 'all should have been well'

To clarify it is true that sin is cause of all this pain...(in bodies, minds, creation, in our culture filled with greed, violence, in wars, in famine, in abuse of every sort)...

But Jesus, who in this Vision informed me of all that is needful to me, answered by this word and said ***'It behoved (necessary) that there should be sin, but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well'*** (selections from page 31)

Romans 8:28-29 TPT

So we are convinced that every detail of our lives is continually woven together for good, for we are his lovers who have been called to fulfill his designed purpose. For he knew all about us before we were born and he destined us from the beginning to share the likeness of his Son. This means the Son is the oldest among a vast family of brothers and sisters who will become just like him.

Beloved the Good News we proclaim is that in the midst of the unending headlines filled with human suffering, harm and pain - God has come to tell a story to weave a tapestry of His Grace - that every detail of our lives is touched by this Grace to tell an eternal story that we have become a part of - this is the mystery of our confession. We believe in a Grace that will make all things work together - so we can say - all shall be well.

Do not hear what I am not saying - the pain its real - the world really is bearing under the weight of what is not good but because of the good work of Jesus all will be well and all manner of thing shall be well. He works all things together for our good...

Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again!

You see there was a day when my fathers repetition of Romans 8:28 felt dismissive at its worst and a triumphal denial of pain at its best. All things work together for good....he would say and I would hear a sort of philosophy of life that in the end all things work out....but wait that doesn't hold up. To a sex abuse survivor - nothing of that was good, nope cancer is not good and for clarity nothing about trafficking of human being was or is or ever will be good. Then you add the caveat for 'those who love the Lord' - so for my little brain that had grown up with a gospel centered on sin and sin management that meant if its bad....guess whose fault that is? And to be really clear to say that somehow things by themselves work for good is to truly misunderstand the scripture and also to utterly miss the reality of pain, suffering and especially evil.

Yet Julian of Norwich had a bit more clarity in her vision when she said this; *For the Passion of our Lord is comfort to us again all this, and so is His blessed will. And for the tender love that our good*

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*Lord hath to all that shall be saved, He comforteth readily and sweetly, signifying thus: **It is sooth (true) that sin is cause of all this pain; but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.***

These words were said full tenderly, showing no manner of blame to me nor to any that shall be saved. Then were it a great unkindness to blame or wonder on God for my sin, since He blameth not me for sin. And in these words I saw a marvelous high mystery hid in God, which mystery He shall openly make known to us in Heaven; in which knowing we shall verily see the cause why He suffered sin to come. In which sight we shall endlessly joy in our Lord God.

Paul said this way to the Church in Corinth I Corinthians 13:17 (The Voice)

'...we can see a dim blurry picture of things, as when we stare into polished metal...'

- This is exactly what I hear in Julian's writing - the struggle to understand the mess of her life - yet it was the revelation of the mystery of the Love of Christ that changed everything - to be clear it was her perspective that shifted.
- To surrender to an invitation that not only God knows but is able to make all things well - to weave them into something good and beautiful? Yes!

For the last several days I have had this word **mystery** ringing in my head and heart - beloved the gospel of Jesus Christ is NOT a new version of debt cancellation that Jesus passed by His father on our behalf!

- **The mystery of this Gospel is that He came and still comes into mans wandering places and restores all that is Good and Beautiful.**
- Such is the wonder of this good news is that He takes it all even the pain and turns into a beautiful tapestry revealing there really is something more powerful than all of the destructive forces at work around us!
- The love of God revealed in Christ by self giving self emptying love and forgiveness!

He takes all of it and does so much more than remove debt - He is revealing Good the house of abundance.

Beloved here is why this word mystery has been ringing in my head - this is based on my certainty or moral performance - Christ has died and Christ has risen - there is a power at work that gives beauty for ashes. I do not know how but I have come to the place that I am no longer interested in being certain of my certainty or my moral perfection (yes it matters what you believe and how you live - but not as a basis to get an otherwise reluctant God to be kind and benevolent - but rather a revelation that I have a really good father). So I don't have to talk Him into being what He already is - I don't have to persuade Him to care for what He already cares about....wow! I am becoming convinced that all will be well - is the fact that God is really comitted to revealing God.

Colossians 1:12-20 TPT

12Your hearts can soar with joyful gratitude when you think of how God made you worthy to receive the glorious inheritance freely given to us by living in the light. 13He has rescued us completely from the tyrannical rule of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom realm of his beloved Son. 14For in the Son all our sins are canceled and we have the release of redemption through his very blood.

15He is the divine portrait, the true likeness of the invisible God, and the firstborn heir of all creation. 16For in him was created the universe of things, both in the heavenly realm and on the earth, all that is

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seen and all that is unseen. Every seat of power, realm of government, principality, and authority—it all exists through him and for his purpose! 17He existed before anything was made, and now everything finds completion in him.

18He is the Head of his body, which is the church. And since he is the beginning and the firstborn heir in resurrection, he is the most exalted One, holding first place in everything. 19For God is satisfied to have all his fullness dwelling in Christ. 20And by the blood of his cross, everything in heaven and earth is brought back to himself—back to its original intent, restored to innocence again!

This is a mystery beloved...vs 22 - The Voice

He has reconciled you in His body—in His flesh through His death—so that He can present you to God holy, blameless, and totally free of imperfection

Not by works but on the basis of His love and passion

The Mystery - Christ put on a human body and bore all of the pain of sin and its consequences in His body - **Christ has Died.**

1 Timothy 3:16 - our '**confession**' from The Passion Translation - the mystery of godliness

For the mystery of righteousness is beyond all question!

He was revealed as a human being,

and as our great High Priest in the Spirit!

Angels gazed upon him as a man

and the glorious message of his kingly rulership is being preached to the nations!

Many have believed in him

and he has been taken back to heaven,

and has ascended into the place of exalted glory in the heavenly realm.

Yes, great is this mystery of righteousness!

Christ has Risen

Ephesians 3:10 - God is weaving an eternal tapestry beloved

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and the glorious message of his kingly rulership is being preached to the nations!

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and he has been taken back to heaven,

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Yes, great is this mystery of righteousness!

Christ will come again....in me!

- **It is Christ in you the hope of glory Colossians 1:27**

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Living within you is the Christ who floods you with the expectation of glory! This mystery of Christ, embedded within us, becomes a heavenly treasure chest of hope filled with the riches of glory for his people, and God wants everyone to know it!

Beloved here is why this is good news today - God is telling a story in the cosmos and we are a part of that story. Its a story we get a little picture of in Revelation 4-5 that causes men and women to be stunned at the beauty of His mercy and grace!

I learned about something this week called **Kin Sugi pottery**:

- it is a Japanese art of taking broken pottery and not just putting it back together but actually making it more beautiful than it was before.
- Kin - gold Sugi - together - the artist takes what is broken and puts it together and then fills then covers it with gold. Beloved this is a picture of Romans 8:28 Jesus has taken all that is broken and put it back together - that is Shalom but even more He has bound it with the gold of His divine love and grace revealing something even more beautiful.
- **All will be well - because of the Love of God revealed in Christ - take a deep breath beloved - all will be well. He is working all things together for good.**

I asked my wife if I could close a message with a quote from a movie and book that I have neither read not fully watched but it is soo good - from Tolkien's Lord of the rings - The return of the King - Samwise says

*"Gandalf! I thought you were dead! But then I thought I was dead myself. Is everything sad going to come untrue? What's happened to the world?"
A great Shadow has departed," said Gandalf, and then he laughed and the sound was like music, or like water in a parched land; and as he listened the thought came to Sam that he had not heard laughter, the pure sound of merriment, for days upon days without count."
— J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King**

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I want to close this morning a little different by reading a poem that Brian Zahnd ended his book When everything's on fire – bring us to Communion.

*LAUGHING NOW – Brian Zahnd
Something is happening to me something is bubbling in me
Like I'm about to laugh
Like I just heard the best news
Unexpected--yet a secret I've always known I believe!
Like never before
I believe in Jesus
I believe what the Gospels tell*

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*What the creeds confess
But it's more than that How can I explain?
I believe in the greatest wonder of all The Word became flesh!
So God could join us!
God becoming human to heal humanity
I believe Jesus is the all in all
All things summed up in him
I believe in the restoration of all things
Jesus is the Savior of the world!
It's more than the rescue of a few (lucky/elect) souls
Whisked off to heaven at the last second As a consolation prize for a God whose plan didn't quite
work out
Salvation belongs to the Lord
And it's bigger than we have imagined look at the Crucified and believe
I see perfect Love providing the Solution
Arms outstretched to embrace even enmity
Healing a world gone wrong with his wounds
Sin forgiven. Satan defeated. War abolished. Death
destroyed. Creation restored.
I believe the mystic's thirteenth revelation of divine love
All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of
things shall be well
I didn't say I can explain it or defend it
But I believe it!
I believe the Gospel John gave
The Galilean prophet who is I AM
Bread. Light. Gate. Shepherd. Resurrection. Vine. Way.
Truth. Life.
I believe we can eat his flesh and drink his blood
And live forever
I believe the vision John saw
New Jerusalem. New Heaven. New Earth.
I'm laughing now because I believe it when Jesus says-
Behold, I make all things new!
I'm laughing now because I believe that in the end
love wins
Love believes all things and hopes all things
What would love believe about God? Believe that.
What would love hope for humanity? Hope that.
And laugh now
(If just for a little bit)*

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