

PRAISE INTERNATIONAL
THE GREATEST OF ALL
MATTHEW 22:34-40

Good Morning

Prayer Needs - Preston, Ann, Funeral Ken Bojrab - this Friday Nov 3 Do McComb Maplecrest

On one of our trips abroad years ago Neice and I had exchanged some money into British Pounds that we wound up not using - then we decided rather than take the loss in exchange back to USD we would just hold onto the pounds - it was our way of leaving a 'place' in our future that we would once again return to London. Then after the death of the Queen and the coronation of King Charles we heard something about how the certain printed British Pound notes would no longer be taken - it wasn't a lot of money so we didn't really worry too much about it but then this last year we went to our bank to ask about exchanging the money and discovered no us bank would take them! Bummer. So while on a long lay over at London Heathrow we thought we will just take care of it then...but wait even there they did not want to take them...now it was not a lot of money I think it was like 50 pounds. But it was 50 pounds that we were discovering would be worth absolutely nothing....

Now there is a whole picture life - I am holding in my hand paper that at one time men and women had given their life in exchange for...that was now worth nothing!

- Paper that at one time could be used to buy food - lodging...worthless.

Neice and I were just out of town this past week and sharing dinner with a couple we had meet from Ohio. The husband had retired following the sale of his IT business and the wife was working what she described as her final job assignment for a large corporation in IT specifically in helping this company integrate generative Artificial Intelligence into their company. It was the wife's work in AI that really piqued my curiosity. Then she began to say some things that were assuring and some that were a bit scary. Like we all need to recognize that we have been groomed to accept AI by these devices in our pockets called smart phones and not all of it is bad. But then she made a statement that woke me that night - 'most of us are unaware of commodities that we have given away to tech - not just our age or where we live - those are not what companies are paying to discover they already know most that - the commodity they are gathering is about your likes and dislikes - that is what they are really selling'. As I thought about the conversation while drifting to sleep I awoke with this strong wording - business understands the value of your time, attention and affections than you do.

- Business knows your worth more than you do!
- This is what shapes what we are invited to **consume** - this is what drives how we are driven to **conform** and eventually what winds up **controlling** so many.
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Values not driven by the Kingdom of God but by the world around us that is cashing in on our desires. The most valuable commodity of our life given in exchange for what so often in the end - according to Jesus moth and rust destroy or thieves can break in and steal.

Yet Jesus comes to the world to proclaim the radical transforming work of the Kingdom of God on the earth that is not driven by consumption of power systems - Jesus do we need to take over the places of influence to bring change? Do we need more money? Do we need another ruler? Do we need a different education system? Do we need more freedoms? You get my point
Nope in the end all they are all worthless paper.

- **I know what you are worth!**
- **I know what the power of a flourishing human life - lived in love.**

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.
Col 1:27b JB Phillips

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The most transformative commodity on the earth - love. This treasure in jars of clay has the power to reveal the glory and intelligence of another age. In the end it will be seen as the Holy Revolution that it really is - no greater commandment - Love! And that beloved is Good News.

In his book *Ancient Echos* - Walter Brueggemann points to how deeply our thinking has been affected by the systems of our worldly thinking that invites us to believe that things like 'inequality' is just normal.

Pointing to the Exodus he expounds how the Israelites were experiencing more than just an Exodus from slavery of body but an Exodus of imagination. Remember that as they are leaving Egypt two things are happening - they are 'marching in martial array', they are marching 'like' a powerful people or like what they imagine a powerful people look like. They also ask for silver and gold as they leave - so they have all they need to be somebody in their mind - 3 days later they have no water - 30 days after that they have no food...

- **In the wilderness informed by lack of resource they are convinced of God's absence...**

So their best imagination for their hunger is to return to the severe inequality of Egypt.

- Their best imagination for their lack is **Pharaoh's temple**.
- Their vision of God at its best - was like - well it was like Pharaoh's army and Pharaoh's excess...even though Pharaoh used food not to meet a need but for power and inequality - they had no way to duplicate the only system that at least allowed them to survive.
- Their was no way they could survive the desert because God (remember they believed in God - but the only God they knew looked like the gods of Egypt - and all they had experienced was what felt like lack and abandonment) as they could see - was NOT there!

Turns out that their best vision of leaving slavery was that they would be a better version of Egypt...when Israel's best faith was for the 'food' of Egypt - God comes to confront imagination - something never seen - bread in the wilderness. Bread that was not used as a commodity but bread to satisfy hunger at no cost.

Here is the surprise -

- Turns out the natural habitat of Yahweh is not Pharaoh's court - but the wilderness'
- Turns out the 'wilderness' is occupied territory - not a barren wasteland.
- That occupation means it is not a just a hope of survival but a life giving space!
- Turns out that God is able to meet everyone equally

Beloved the life of true faith is not about a shiny 'Christian' version of the temple of Pharaoh. Make sense?

The Kingdom that Jesus came to reveal does not operate like the Kingdoms of the world - it doesn't need beans, bullets and paper notes....

- The Cross transcends time and space to reach the deepest need and transform!
- The Kingdom that comes to meet us equally and transform.

Beloved the greatest commandment is not just a really good idea that Jesus intended that we be nice...it is the center of transforming work of His Kingdom.

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Faith is about learning to inhabit our life - that can often feel more like a wilderness leaving us longing for the courts of power and privilege - with the power of the Love of God to transform - even the world I live in filled with fear, anxiety, inequality, violence, war and every violation of human flourishing - this world.

So this wilderness can bear fruit?

- if lived by the law of another Kingdom - a Kingdom where the poor, the meek, pure in heart, those who lament inherit something they did not get or gain.

Those who have rejected the laws consumption and greed that lead to a false life.

- Gods provision - His manna can come in a place and way that we had not imagined?
- Yes because in His Kingdom the goal has will always be human flourishing - *I have come that they would have life and have it to the full.*

What the world of Egypt has commoditized God is sharing freely - He has given everything I need...

- What God values - *do justice love mercy and walk humble with Him.*
- Augustine who said *'What is it that I love what I say I love God?'*

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus answered him, " 'Love the Lord your God with every passion of your heart, with all the energy of your being, and with every thought that is within you.' This is the great and supreme commandment.

What if we simply took a moment right now and allowed our mind to consider the number of things that concern us individually and corporately - close our eyes.

- **God you can fill, provide and reveal Yourself in this wilderness.**
- **What am I doing to bring that world into existence?**
And the second is like it in importance: 'You must love your friend in the same way you love yourself.' Contained within these commandments to love you will find all the meaning of the Law and the Prophets."
- Philosopher John Caputo who said *' The only measure of love is love without measure '.*

Jesus comes to the world to proclaim the radical transforming work of the Kingdom of God on the earth that is not driven by consumption of power systems - Jesus do we need to take over the places of influence to bring change? Do we need more money? Do we need another ruler? Do we need a different education system? Do we need more freedoms? You get my point

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Closing Prayer - Communion

**Almighty God, your Son has shown us how to love one another.
May our love for you overflow into joyous service
and be a healing witness to our neighbors
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

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