

HOLY WEEK: 1

Monday 6th April – Holy Week Reflection: 12:30-1pm & 7:30-8pm

Introduction:

Holy Week begins with Jesus entering Jerusalem on a humble donkey. He is hailed as King; songs are sung and cloaks and palms are laid in his path as it would be for any ruler or royalty. But little do the people know that Jesus entering Jerusalem, the heart of God's people Israel, would be the culmination of His ministry on earth. Many will now turn away from Him and against Him because of His challenge to change. His teaching becomes stronger, His parables become more challenging. He shines light into darkness and evil hates Him for exposing its corruption. Jesus experiences a dichotomy of reaction to His presence as He reveals Truth by confronting dishonesty, exploitation, wickedness and all manner of wrongdoing. Those who are right with God love Him and follow Him to the end; those not right with God hate Him and are literally 'hell bent' on His destruction. This week follows the path of His final journey with its powerful challenges that charge us to contemplate our personal position. Jesus asks us, as He did those of His time, to look for Truth and make our own choice whether to turn away or follow Him to the end.

The Lord's Prayer: *all say together*

CD 2: The Best Instrumental Worship Album ever! **Track 1:** Be still

Matthew 21:28-32 *The Parable of the Two Sons*

²⁸"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go sir'; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the Kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him."

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Reflection: Instead of a character meditation I am using a well-known song (*will you/won't you...join the dance?*) to reflect on the Scriptural message from perhaps a slightly different angle. If interpreted loosely, the words would seem to compare with the Parable as an invitation from the Lord to join Him in His dance of ministry on earth. In Christian terms, the 'other shore' might suggest heaven and the eternal life promised when we determine that 'we will' obey God's call? The question posed by the Lord and echoed in the song is: will we or won't we join in God's plan (dance) by trusting Jesus and continue the work on earth that He began, working together, as God's family?

The Mock Turtle's Song (Lobsters Quadrille)

from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll)

"Will you walk a little faster?" said a whiting to a snail,
"There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's treading on my tail.
See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance!
They are waiting on the shingle – will you come and join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance?"

"You can really have no notion how delightful it will be
When they take us up and throw us, with the lobsters, out to sea!"
But the snail replied "Too far, too far!" and gave a look askance —
Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, would not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, could not join the dance.
"What matters it how far we go?" his scaly friend replied.
"There is another shore, you know, upon the other side.
The further off from England the nearer is to France —
Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and join the dance.
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance?"

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Matthew 21:33-46 *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants*

³³"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence round it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. ³⁴When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' ³⁹So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹They said to Him, 'He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time'. ⁴²Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing and it is amazing in your eyes?' ⁴³Therefore I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the Kingdom. ⁴⁴The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls." ⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they realized that He was speaking about them. ⁴⁶They wanted to arrest Him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded Him as a prophet."

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Reflection: How sad that those who should have known better thought only of themselves. Those listening to Jesus were not ignorant of the promises of God or prophecies contained in Scripture. However, they were so focussed on their own desires and self-importance; they were blind to the Truth that stood before their very eyes and deaf to the Word of God heard with their very own ears! When we determine to follow our own understanding we disfigure God's commandments, skew Truth, and deny the grace of God's love. Sadly, this is just what the chief priests and Pharisees did.

GOD'S RULES ©Janice Morgan-1997

God rules by LOVE not law;
Says the one who has found their own flaw!

God's will is COMPASSION not politics;
Says the one who has tripped on their own tricks!

God judges the TRUTH not deception;
Says the one who has felt God's perception!

God's rules are not bound by this world
God sees and knows all that is done.
God's rules are not there to be cheated
They're the life and the work of His Son.

When compassion breaks open our heart
And the love of the Lord is revealed.
When our spirit embraces the Truth
Our salvation will truly be sealed.

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Matthew 22:1-14 *The Parable of the Wedding Banquet*

¹Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ²“The Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: ‘Look I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ ⁵But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his slaves, “The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ ¹⁰Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹²and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴For many are called but few are chosen.”

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Reflection: In India, wedding guests are given a gift of wedding robes to wear when they accept the invitation. This identifies those who have been officially invited and acknowledges their respect for the couple getting married and their respective families. Marriage is the most important moment of union a man and woman can commit to. Once the moment is past it cannot be re-enacted, it is set as a lasting memory forever. The couple want everyone to bless their union, witness their life-long commitment to each other and join in their celebration. The more guests that come, the greater the celebration and grander the depth of occasion. To turn down such an invitation is disrespectful to all concerned. This is the point Jesus is making. If we turn down God's invitation to the marriage of Jesus and His bride, the Church, then we are disrespecting all of God's family. The consequences are that God will exclude us from the celebration and invite others who will show the Father and His Son the respect they deserve. Once the invitation is rejected there is no going back; the moment has passed, they will not receive the wedding clothes and be thrown out if they try to enter!

GOD IS WEeping ©Janice Morgan-1997

Listen! God is weeping for His family!

Politics stands arrogantly at the head of His church while her Groom waits broken hearted at the altar. The pain of her parting is great yet He is patient as He longs for His bride who flirts with money and power.

Such is His love that He gave up His life, His all for her safe return, but she cares not as she lies on her bed of complacency. The reality of the Groom's True love is forgotten as the bride lives her illusion and the beauty He gave her wastes away.

O come, faithless bride; put off your falsehood and pride, wake up to your desolate state. Return to your Groom Who stands patiently waiting to feed you with His nourishing infinite love.

Repent of your foolishness, weep over your blindness; break free from your stubborn will; submit yourself wholly to His loving mercy. He will cleanse all your grime, re-clothe you in righteousness and restore all your warmth and your beauty.

Reject the seductions of money and power, shake off the deep sleep of complacency, speak Truth and throw out the political dictator. Set your groom at the head of the house; for the Landlord is God and the bride is His tenant who is charged with the nurture of His children.

Make haste, don't delay, all is wasting away; Listen! God is weeping for His family!

CD 2: The Best Instrumental Worship Album ever! – *continued...*

Poem/meditation: LET MY EYES RUN DOWN WITH TEARS ©Janice Morgan-1998

Let my eyes run down with tears for the Church, for she has lost her way and continually stumbles in darkness. She stubs her toe on sharp edges of criticism and bangs her head on beams of judgement. Her hands are burned in jealousy's heat and bitterness curdles her stomach. Pride has hardened her heart where the cracks of hypocrisy appear and are covered with political paper.

Let my eyes run down with tears for the Church, for she has put on the armour of self-destruction. No windows look out as she only sees in and withdraws from the light of reality. Her insular gaze does not see Jesus' face and spikes of tradition impale His messengers. Doors of vision are barred as the food of God's Word is dissected and the less palatable bits discarded.

Let my eyes run down with tears for the Church, for she has become spiritually anorexic. She shuns any nourishment and if force-fed will covertly spew up any substance. The mirror of change reflects a picture she just cannot bear, hardening her resolve of starvation. The Master of love offers tonic of prayer but repentance is too bitter a medicine. God stands by and watches, as all help is rejected, and weeps as she withers and dies.

Let my eyes run down with tears for the Church, for she fails to see all of God's blessings. She stubbornly stays out of reach of her Father, Who would give her every desire of her heart. So He watches and waits, in the hope she'll return; a decision that's not His to make. Each commandment she breaks adds more pain to God's heart, as He longs for His Church to be one.

Silent pause:...

CD 1: Wow Hits 2010 **Track 3:** *Slow Fade* by Casting Crowns

Be careful little eyes what you see
It's the second glance that ties your hands as darkness pulls the strings
Be careful little feet where you go
For it's the little feet behind you that are sure to follow

It's a slow fade when you give yourself away
It's a slow fade when black and white have turned to grey
Thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid
When you give yourself away
People never crumble in a day
It's a slow fade, it's a slow fade

Be careful little ears what you hear
When flattery leads to compromise, the end is always near
Be careful little lips what you say
For empty words and promises lead broken hearts astray

It's a slow fade when you give yourself away
It's a slow fade when black and white have turned to grey
Thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid
When you give yourself away
People never crumble in a day
The journey from your mind to your hands
Is shorter than you're thinking
Be careful if you think you stand
You just might be sinking

It's a slow fade when you give yourself away
It's a slow fade when black and white have turned to grey
Thoughts invade, choices are made, a price will be paid
When you give yourself away
People never crumble in a day
Daddies never crumble in a day
Families never crumble in a day

Oh be careful little eyes what you see
Oh be careful little eyes what you see
For the Father up above is looking down in love
Oh be careful little eyes what you see

Resources:

CD 2: The Best Instrumental Worship Album ever!

CD 1: Wow Hits 2010

Copies of: x7

Song: *Slow Fade* – Casting Crowns