

“War: the ‘Current Unpleasantness’”

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Text: Psalm 73

When Asaph, the composer of this psalm, chooses to **draw near to God . . . to put his trust in the Lord** which phrases mean faith—**without faith it is impossible to please God** (Heb. 11:6) **When I came into the sanctuary of the Lord** (v. 17), when I entered the holy place of His presence, when I drew **near to Him**, it was **good for me**—His goodness conveyed itself to me as I beheld and worshipped Him. When God became my point of observation, my entire perspective was transformed—I began to see things from His point of view! And that, that move of faith(!) has made all the difference!

Margarita Mitchel, author of Gone With the Wind, Atlanta, 1936, wrote: “Life’s under no obligation to give us what we expect.” She lived through two world wars, and the Spanish flu pandemic and is tagged as one who might have expressed her feelings about World War Two as :”this current unpleasantness.” And several times, in recent conversations, the topic of “endless wars” has arisen. Fact: the settling of America transpired in a context of endless wars, struggles for dominance in trade, commerce and imperial power that rocked Europe for centuries—sometimes framed as religious wars, they were always geopolitical struggles. Furthermore, it would be very accurate to say that many of those who came to the colonies were refugees from warfare. They wanted to escape the strife and loss of life attributed to senseless, and indifferent and irrelevant wars. The French and Indian wars were close to home, but the tussle of empires (English, French, Spanish, Danish, Dutch and Portuguese) which served to enrich the ruling classes (at the expense of everyone else) which persist in profiting the instigators and promulgators of *endless war* combined with the nagging sense that war is not a necessary condition—or, at the very least, it is a state out of which a good number of folks would seek release, or exception. As it is written, **Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be known as the children of God.**

We are taught, as Christians, **Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** (Romans 12:2) What does that mean? Google says:

Are you living your best life? Shifting your patterns and focus can change your life! That’s what this verse is about—renewing your mind, changing the way you think to create a better life for yourself and a life that honors God. The world and society have patterns or ways that lead to a broken life.

I question how useful, or authoritative this interpretation is—like most statements of the Google universe. But, this simplistic and mentalist explanation ties into both a scriptural reference (Romans 12:2) and some current thinking about fluidity and plasticity (ie sexuality, gender identity which appear to enshrine “you are what you think you are” . . . or, “you are what you identify yourself to be”). But this is both

self-centered and self-serving for starters and philosophically self-defeating in the end. Who decides if you are living your best life? Is this merely egotistical blather, solipsistic (i.e. the self is all we can claim to know exists) as they say? What if we said, **Be transformed by the renewing of your mind and by the infusion of the Spirit which comes by faith? At the very least, this would augment the mentalism of Google life as currently embraced by our culture.** That would be a step forward. **The kingdom of God is within you** (Luke 17:21) Jesus says referring to more than a state of mind. He is proclaiming ‘that **the Kingdom of God is in/or amongst you.**’ He is among you. He is the epicenter of the new government.’ This is a vital distinction for true understanding of what Jesus was teaching.

Let’s review the whole passage:

20 Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God is not coming with [a]signs to be observed; 21 nor will they say, ‘Look, here *it is!*’ or, ‘There *it is!*’ For behold, the kingdom of God is [b]in your midst.”

Second Coming Foretold

22 And He said to the disciples, “The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 23 They will say to you, ‘Look there! Look here!’ Do not go away, and do not run after *them*. 24 For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part [c]of the sky, shines to the other part [d]of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. 25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. 26 And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 [e]It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; 29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and [f]brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 It will be [g]just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.¹

¹ Footnotes

- a. Luke 17:20 Lit *observation*
- b. Luke 17:21 Or *within you*
- c. Luke 17:24 Lit *under heaven*
- d. Luke 17:24 Lit *under heaven*

Note first the controversy. Jesus gives two responses: first to the Pharisees and subsequently, to His disciples. What does He say to the Pharisees? He says that the coming of the kingdom will not be subject to **observation**—it will not be subject to scientific discovery. **For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.** It is primarily present in Me in your midst; it has to do with Me as your unlikely king—proclaiming the kingdom initiated by My rule in this world, in your lives. Salvation is from heaven! Secondly, the kingdom must invade you, infuse itself into you—it is not inner potential, it is not summoned from within but it is something added to your subjective reality as it were objectively. And how is it added? Through faith, through the indwelling Spirit which Jesus has sent into the world. **Within you** is the location, or street address of the Spirit from heaven. It is a spiritual supplement!

Significantly, Jesus suggests that His presence is a certain “pleasantness:” **the days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man.** However, ominously, **you will not see it.** (v.22) Those who imagine that they can “see,” or observe the Second Coming of the Lord with His Kingdom, will rush about, falsely advertising: **Look here! Look there! Do not run after them.** The Son of Man will appear like a flash of lightning. Sudden, bright and incontrovertible.
25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. The Kingdom will not come until the work of the atonement has been accomplished. It will be like two judgments which Jesus references: the Flood, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The day of His revealing will be accompanied with judgment—the destruction of the wicked—coupled with the deliverance of the elect of God (Noah’s family, Lot and his family). What happened in real time and real space will happen again in that day.

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind *and by the infusion of the Spirit which comes by faith?*

I need to mention that a single passage of Scripture can alter everything. Take Genesis 3:14-15 for example:

**14 The Lord God said to the serpent,
 “Because you have done this,
 Cursed are you more than all cattle,
 And more than every beast of the field;
 On your belly you will go,
 And dust you will eat
 All the days of your life;**

15

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- e. Luke 17:28 Lit *In the same way as*
 - f. Luke 17:29 I.e. burning sulfur
 - g. Luke 17:30 Lit *according to the same things*

**And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall [a]bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”**

God has put endless enmity between the seed of Satan and the seed of Eve but the declaration of war is between Eve and the Serpent. Satan's animosity towards women is a defining factor. Satan wishes to steal, kill and destroy womanhood *out of this enmity*. His malice towards her is composed of implacable hatred. He would render her hopeless, isolated, barren and destitute—with intent to murder. In this sense we do experience endless war. The destroyer never lets up and if he cannot destroy her outright, he attacks her children, her fertility, her powers of reproduction. Reproductive freedom is his poison pill—and if we saw birth control and abortion through this lens (the enmity) we would be close to the mark. Isn't it clever of our Adversary to convince us to impoverish and self-harm in the name of prosperity and the hope of freedom!

Counting the cost of liberation from our biology is a most rare preoccupation.

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The renewing of our minds . . . the infusion of the Spirit by faith which is the power of the indwelling Christ, which is the kingdom of God within us can lead us to forsake the pursuit of our best life and to choose differently, to choose to follow Christ into the better life that He offers when He says, **You must be born again, or, born from above.**

What does this have to do with Psalm 73? When Asaph, the composer of this psalm, chooses to **draw near to God . . . to put his trust in the Lord** which phrases mean faith—**without faith it is impossible to please God** (Heb. 11:6) **When I came into the sanctuary of the Lord** (v. 17), when I entered the holy place of His presence, when I drew **near to Him**, it was **good for me**—His goodness conveyed itself to me as I beheld and worshipped Him. When God became my point of observation, my entire perspective was transformed—I began to see things from His point of view! And that, that move of faith(!) has made all the difference!

What does “good for me” mean? It means that centered in God I avoid moral affliction and confusion; it means that the charms and attractions of this world (all misdirection!) lose their power to seduce and mislead me. I even quit the company of the disengaged, the wicked who go awhoring after other gods/pleasures, away from God of our salvation. God changes the conditions of my life and I adjust to that! He makes all things new and that is the garden I delight to walk in! When

God is all my delight by faith, then I am free to become all God purposes for me to be—I am free!

Amen