



Jesus, the Teacher

Mark 1:21-28

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

January 28, 2018

Thought for the Week

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her, her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope." (Hosea 2:14-15)

Trouble tends to engulf us when we least expect it and at the most inconvenient of times –

News of a relative, suddenly taken ill, just as I'm about to board a flight for a much-needed holiday

I encounter a rail strike on the precise day that I need to travel by train for a crucial appointment

Sickness striking at the one time that I need to be at my very best for work

Notification of dismissal received when I'm fully committed financially, with a mortgage and a family to support

A printer failure just at the point when I'm desperate to print an important document

How ought we to respond, as Christians, to times of trouble, difficulty and hardship? There are a number of good and biblical responses, of course. We should not be anxious about anything but rather pray. We should trust God and remind ourselves that he's supreme over every aspect of this world and of our lives, in the big things as well as the small things. We should be thankful and joyful – not in a trite or masochistic kind of way but rejoicing in the Lord and his goodness no matter how tough the circumstances we face.

The writer of Hebrews also urges us, as a general principle, to "endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?" (12:7). Now we're not encouraged to try and match specific troubles we might be facing with certain sins that we may have committed. Rather we're simply to accept that any form of difficulty or hardship we face in this world is being used by our perfect Father in Heaven to discipline and train us. To conform our lives just a little bit more to the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's people Israel are facing God's discipline in Hosea Chapter 2. "I will punish her for the feast days of the Baal's", declares the LORD through his prophet, "when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers and forgot me" (verse 13). In the very next verse, he promises to allure her and bring her into the wilderness. And we might expect the next words to be something like 'and punish her harshly' or 'give her a right old telling

off.' But no. God's intention, even in the midst of exercising his fatherly discipline, is "to speak tenderly to her" and to "make the valley of Achor a door of hope."

The valley of Achor is a reference back to Joshua Chapter 7. It's the place where rebellious Achan was buried. He was stoned to death because he kept back for himself some of the plunder from the victory over Jericho, in direct disobedience to the LORD's clear instructions. The Hebrew word Achor (Akor) means trouble or disturbance. But in Hosea, God promises his people that he'll turn the Valley of Achor into "a door of hope." So the disturbance of his discipline will become a gateway leading to hope. The hope of forgiveness, mercy, restoration.

Hosea's God is our God. He hasn't changed. Still today he is the God who can turn troubles into hope. Difficult circumstances will undoubtedly come your way, things unexpected and inconvenient that will disturb your comfort. And we're to endure such things as the discipline of a loving Father. Is he perhaps trying to shake off those other loves; the things or people that we allow to become more important to us than the LORD and that cause us to forget him? Maybe. But whatever his plans and purposes in allowing hardship into your life, remember that with the God who is rich in mercy and who abounds in love and faithfulness, valleys of trouble can always be transformed into doors of hope.

Happy Birthday Wayne (1/28)

Jesus the Teacher

It may interest you to know that Jesus was a teacher. Other words come more quickly to mind—Lord, Savior, Master, and Redeemer. But here's an amazing fact. Of the 90 times Jesus was addressed directly in the gospels, 60 times he was called Teacher. This was the word the multitudes used. This was how the disciples referred to him. Jesus himself used the term when he said, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am" (John 13:13). When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, he said, "We know that you are a teacher who has come from God" (John 3:2).

History has echoed the truth of that verdict. Scottish theologian James Stuart said, "The teaching of Jesus has had a power and an effect with which the influence of no other teacher can even for a moment be compared." When Jesus had finished giving the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew tells us the crowds were so amazed at his teaching because "he taught as one having authority, not as the teachers of the law" (Matthew 7:29). The rabbis quoted each other, but Jesus spoke the true and authoritative words of God.

He never entered a classroom, as we know a classroom. He never had a degree, as we understand an educational degree, yet the entire world was his classroom. No degreed teacher did anything greater than what Jesus Christ did. He was truly and absolutely the Master Teacher and the greatest teacher of all time

Was Jesus a teacher and did he teach well? Consider his final words, his last instructions, his ultimate command as given to us in the King James Version: "Go ye into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19 KJV). His final command was a teaching command.

How well did it work? Look around you. Two thousand years have passed and today across the world over two billion people bear his name. Christianity has spread from Jerusalem to every corner of the globe. At this very moment thousands of missionaries are doing what Jesus said to do: teaching all nations. If the success of the students is the measure of the teacher, then no teacher was ever so successful as the one and only Master Teacher, Jesus Christ.