

Today's Quick Word Exodus 38:22-23

By Bruce Christian

EXODUS 38:22-23 Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made everything the LORD commanded Moses; with him was Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan - a craftsman and designer, and an embroiderer in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen.

There have been times when I have been introduced at a speaking engagement by being asked to select someone from history whom I would like to have dinner with if I was given the chance. I never find this easy to answer, but, having read today's verses, I think I might choose Uri and Ahisamach's sons, Bezalel and Oholiab! I would love to ask them how on earth they managed to conceptualise and construct the Tabernacle out of an odd collection of 'jumble sale' items, out in the desert, and with no access to weaving machines, industrial sewing machines, lathes, or 3-D printers! And how did they follow Moses' description of what he wanted without a CAD machine?

Admittedly, I kind of know what their answer would be because of what we are told in 36:1 - "So Bezalel, Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD has given skill and ability to know how to carry out all the work of constructing the sanctuary

are to do the work just as the LORD has commanded." There are often things that God calls us to do that are beyond our very limited abilities and resources, but usually, all he requires of us is a sincere commitment to a bit of 'fear and trembling' - he will even provide us, not only with the skill and ability, but with the necessary 'willing heart'.

As the Apostle Paul so aptly reminds us, "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed - not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence - continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philippians 2:12-13). Trusting God fully in the face of challenging and difficult tasks (like participating in an online Skype/Zoom meeting) is never easy or natural - that's where the 'fear and trembling' come in; but in his strength we can go forward in faith, and even 'discover' that God is able to keep his promises - just like he did last time we were confronted by an overwhelming predicament. Even as I write this, I must admit that I am a slow learner in this department, but God is so patient!

Today's Quick Word John 20:17

By Bruce Christian

JOHN 20:17 Jesus said [to Mary Magdalene], “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

It is hard for us to appreciate the full impact that these words would have had on Mary. She was emotionally distraught as she struggled to take in what she was experiencing at the tomb. It was bad enough that the One she had come to trust as her Lord and Master had just been ‘crucified, dead, and buried’ (as the Apostles’ Creed puts it). She had come to investigate Peter & John’s report that they had found the tomb empty on the third day since then, and on enquiring of the ‘gardener’ what he had done with the body, had discovered that the ‘gardener’ was, in fact, Jesus - risen from the dead. This reality had hit her like a bombshell by the way the ‘stranger’ had addressed her by name, “Mary” (16), and her knee-jerk reaction had been to call out, “Rabboni/Teacher”. She had no conscious choice but to acknowledge him as the One he had all along claimed to be, the One who had said to Philip and the other disciples, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” (14:9), and who earlier had claimed: “I and the Father are one” (10:30), claiming to be

God himself in human form.

Unbelievable! But, as if this was not enough, here he was now saying that the very human disciples were his BROTHERS, sons with him of HIS Father, God, members of the same FAMILY - WITH HIM!. Later, the Author of Hebrews had come to understand what this meant when he wrote, “Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.” (Hebrews 2:11). With 2,000 years of theological Christian reflection behind us, we probably don’t find this all that amazing. But from Mary’s perspective it would have been mind-blowing!

When we refer to each other as ‘brothers and sisters in Christ’, do we realise the full import of this? The Apostle Paul captures it when he writes, “Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” (Galatians 4:6). ‘Son of’ in Aramaic is ‘bar’, so if I acknowledge who I am, by God’s grace, in Aramaic, I would refer to myself as ‘Bar-Abbas’ - the one who was set free because Jesus was crucified instead of him.



Today's Quick Word Proverbs 18:1-2

By Bruce Christian

PROVERBS 18:1-2 An unfriendly man pursues selfish ends; he defies all sound judgment. A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.

It is interesting how, in these two verses, Solomon draws our attention to the close connection between sound judgement/understanding and friendliness/concern for others on the one hand, and between unfriendliness/selfishness and foolishness on the other hand. The present global virus crisis provides a demonstration of the wisdom contained in these words. The necessary social isolation and the corresponding tensions that can arise because of it, and the fact that we all have 'different

opinions' about the best course of action in untested waters, are a good reminder to us of the importance of making the effort to always be self-denyingly friendly and more inclined to listen gladly and empathetically to one another rather than expressing our own opinions. This will not be easy, seeing that the media seem to be doing all they can to stir up dissension in order to give them more things to report on! (I apologise for my obsession with exposing the bias of the media, but I think it is important that we show discernment and let God's Word shape our thinking in all things rather than being over-influenced by the continual impact of news reports.)