

All Saints Anglican Church of Southern Arizona, Inc. Advent 2 Sunday Sermon on 2017-12-10

God's Attitude Toward His Bible **by Fr Reed Merino**

From Luke 21:

Verse 32 "I assure you: This generation will certainly not pass away until all things take place.

Verse 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away."

Mainline Christianity & Episcopalian attitude toward the Bible: Bible is [supposedly] "inspired by God," but their attitude also assumes that if we are involved with the church's worship and activities we will get an adequate Scriptural diet. No need to get more involved with it than that. After all, "Too much of ANYthing is bad for you."

The Episcopalians and other unbelieving forms of Christendom also play host to a very cynical view about the Scriptures (expressed by Former Bishop of New Jersey, John Spong): Bible is the CHURCH's book for an older, uglier, prescientific age; church has the right to write another one, appropriate for our age.

A famous poem was written to describe a cynic's view:

The Blind Men and the Elephant
by John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887)
(American satirical poet)

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind

The First approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

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[and the opinions of these “blind men” continue until Saxe concludes with ...]

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

Moral:
So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has actually seen!

Interesting fact about Saxe: he was considered very clever, flippant and light-hearted, and in much demand as a speaker. But after burying five of his six children, as well as his wife, he died a broken man. REAL wisdom is needed to endure REAL life. Light-hearted banter dressed as wisdom does not have staying power. Saxe’s cynicism did not provide what he needed in life, as well as after death; nor does Bishop Spong’s cynical and godless attitude.

The godly, Scripture-soaked wisdom of Corrie Ten Boom, author of *“The Hiding Place,”* got her through the Ravensbruck slave-labor & death camp. The godly, Scripture-soaked wisdom of Horatio Spafford, author of *“It is Well with My Soul,”* got him through the drowning of his four daughters on a ship to England. That hymn was his response to their deaths.

Now, let’s see what the Scriptures say about themselves:

In Proverbs 30:

Verse 5 “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

Verse 6 Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”

[Meaning: If you think you can ignore what is commanded, you are like a private telling the general that you do not intend to obey Him: God had to

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spend more than a thousand years to get that point across to Israel (and that deeply-ingrained instinct became the foundation of the first Church's attitude, as well).

Jesus' Attitude And Practice:

In Mark 7:

Verse 6 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

Verse 7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'

Verse 8 "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men — the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."

Verse 9 He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.

Verse 13 "making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

[They added commands to Scripture; WE however, subtract: but, to the same effect.]

In Luke 3:

Verse 3 And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

Verse 4 But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.' "

["live by" = consecrate yourself to make your life conform to what it says. There is no room for our relaxed and flippant "menu" approach to what Scriptures we find convenient to take seriously.]

When you make the decision to consecrate yourself, THEN you have the right to call yourself a Christian, not before.

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Jesus simply demands of us what He Himself practiced: fulfill the Scriptures that apply to you, with passion! He did that to an amazing detail: e.g.:

From John 12:

Verse 14 'Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written:

Verse 15 "Fear no more, Daughter of Zion. Look, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt".

[There are many, MANY such examples of His acting to fulfill scriptures: e.g., think of His reason for telling them to take their two swords with them to the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22: verse 38)].

THINK about this: He is aware that He is the Creator of the entire universe. Mighty and dangerously frightening ANGELS bow down in worship of Him. Yet He subjects Himself to carefully obey the very Scriptures that HE breathed into John and Zechariah.

If you are not embracing that same attitude, then you do not yet know the only God that there is. In passages like this, God is teaching us, "This is MY book! You do not get to have me without My book! Your attitude toward My book is the REAL attitude you have toward me, as opposed to the attitude you IMAGINE you have.

If you love Me, you love IT. If you are ignorant of IT, you are ignorant of Me! If you disregard or ignore IT, you are defying ME! If you trust IT, you are trusting ME, because I HONOR my Word!

Remember: Jesus said that the Word of God cannot be "broken" (John 10:35).

In Luke 8:

Verse 21 "But He answered and said to them, 'My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and DO it.' "

[Conversely, if you are NOT committed to consecrate yourself to obey the Word of God, you are NOT His. Are YOU committed to be His brother / sister?]

In 1 Thessalonians 2:

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Verse 13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

[Apostolic writings are the written form of His "Word."]

In 2 Peter 3:

Verse 15 "...our dear brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you.

Verse 16 He speaks about these things in all his letters, in which there are some matters that are hard to understand. The untaught and unstable twist them *to their own destruction*, as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures."

[God is saying to you that if you do not receive the teaching of Jesus and His apostles in the way that THEY want you to receive them – if you twist the plain sense of their writings - then you are facing "destruction"!

To illustrate this passage, imagine going to settlement for a new home. In the settlement document, you read the following phrase: "Upon settlement this house will become yours until such time as the bank may choose to take ownership back." Because you are not into careful examination of life-altering documents you choose to interpret it in the way that fits what you WANT it to say: something like "my bank would never just take my house away; so this MUST mean that as long as I make the mortgage payments I am safe'." So you go through the settlement.

Then, fourteen years later they show up and kick you out and you lose it all. At your settlement, you were both "untaught and unstable," and you paid the price, because you did not think that the language meant what it said. Ignoring what this Book says has a much more devastating effect; and that effect is ETERNAL! POURING OVER IT AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS UPON IT: FOR IT *DOES!!!*

The historical descriptions written in the Scriptures are TRUE. His warnings written there are TRUE! He promises written there are TRUE! *LITERALLY* true!]

In 2 TIMOTHY 3:

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Verse 15 "... from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through [the] faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Verse 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

Verse 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

[Paul is therefore saying: "SATURATE yourself in God's Word" to learn everything God has to say about lessons for a life that pleases Him and brings you salvation.]