

Quotes that Nourish Me
Jay Bartow, November 4, 2020

I got to know Eugene Peterson, whose translation of the Bible, *The Message*, touches me for good virtually every time I open it. Here is my favorite passage so far: words of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 11:28-30:

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

The Apostle Paul reflects on all that Jesus reveals to us of God in 2 Corinthians 1:20 RSV

For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him to the glory of God.

Paul writes to the Church in Philippi in Chapter 4:6-9 RSV

Have no anxiety about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

To the church at Thessalonica he writes in 1 Thess. 1:20:19-20 RSV

For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.

Here is a favorite verse from Psalm 86:11 NRSV

Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. Give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

Here are some quotes from sources other than the Bible.

Albert Schweitzer was a missionary physician, world class interpreter of J.S. Bach, and insightful theologian, and was named by *Time Magazine* as the man of the Century in 1948. He closes his work, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, with these words:

He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside He came to those men who knew him not. He speaks to us the same word: 'Follow thou me!' and sets us to the tasks which he has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in his fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is.

C. S. Lewis has shaped my thinking in so many ways, starting with the time I first began to read the New Testament in my freshman year at UCLA. The following passage in *Mere Christianity* in the chapter titled *The Shocking Alternative*, exposed my position that Jesus was merely a great moral teacher as faulty.

People often say about Him: 'I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

Inspiration often came from reference works I consulted in preparing sermons. Here is a favorite from *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible* edited by Alan Richardson. Under *perfect* we see the following. The Greek word often rendered as *perfect* is *teleios*. It can also be rendered as mature or full grown as in Colossians 1:28 NRSV where Paul writes: "It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature (*teleios*) in Christ." In Matthew 5:48 it is rendered, "Be perfect (*teleios*) as your Heavenly Father is perfect.

Now to what the Wordbook says: "To be perfect means, therefore, to be whole or sound or true; and to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect means to be wholly turned, with the whole will and being, to God, as he is turned to us. This is a response of obedience and of effort carried out *in faith*. It is the call to purify our heart and to will one thing."

Here is a passage from the novel *Out of Africa* by Isak Dinesen which I think is especially suited to the present climate in our nation. On page 271 of the paperback edition of that book she writes of pride. I think you will see that she is not referring to the pride that pits us against our neighbor or puts others down, which is listed among the seven deadly sins. Here is a vision of pride which is the opposite of that.

The barbarian loves his own pride, and hates or disbelieves in, the pride of others. I will be a civilized being. I will love the pride of my adversaries, of my servants, and of my lover; and my house shall be, in all humility, in the wilderness a civilized place.

Pride is faith in the idea that God had, when he made us. A proud man is conscious of the idea, and aspires to realize it. He does not strive towards a happiness, or comfort, which may be irrelevant to God's idea of him. His success is the idea of God, successfully carried through, and he is in love with his destiny. As the good citizen finds his happiness in the fulfilment of his duty to the community, so does the proud man find his happiness in the fulfilment of his fate.

People who have no pride are not aware of any idea of God in the making of them, and sometimes they make you doubt that there has ever been much of an idea, or else it has been lost, and who shall find it again? They have got to accept as success what others warrant to be so, and to take their happiness, and even their own selves, at the quotation of the day. They tremble with reason, before their fate.

Love the pride of God beyond all things, and the pride of your neighbor as your own.