

July 1, 2011

Dear Friends & Family,

(6/2) I just finished sending out Junes newsletter yesterday, but felt to start writing this months as by the time you receive this, I will still be at camp, or, recuperating from it, since it ends around 11 p.m. on July 1st! Of course, camp doesnt end for me for many days after the on-site work, re: unpacking & unloading, administrative & follow-up work, etc. In addition, less than a week after I arrive home from camp I head out again for a three-day childrens rally.

YOUR PROPER RESPONSE -- FATHERS RESPONSE

Our Lord Jesus was anticipating His death in John 12. He had already told His disciples more than once the vicious, violent, unjust, & gruesome nature it would entail. It would even be commenced by the betrayal, deceit, ingratitude, & greed of one whom Jesus chose to be with Him, a.k.a., Judas Iscariot. Jesus lived with him, ate countless meals with him, slept out under the stars with him, washed his feet, taught him, doubtless hugged him countless times, empowered & commissioned him to preach, heal, exorcize (so very ironic & tragic that *the leader*

of those very demons whom he would cast out would one day possess him!), & even raise the dead! In my ministry experience of over a quarter of a century now, few things have decimated me more than betrayal by those I trusted, loved, & served. I shall never forget one scene from Braveheart (the one time I did watch it). One of William Wallaces compatriots, whom I want to recollect was of royal blood, betrayed him. Unbeknownst to Wallace, he had a duel on horseback with this same one whom Wallace perceived to be an enemy. This enemy wounded Wallace in this joust, whereupon he fell from his horse, I want to say with an arrow in him. When Wallaces assailant re-moved his helmet, Wallace was stunned & crushed when he saw that it was his former comrade, who had joined the other side. This scene came to mind many years ago when I had a brother in the Lord I served shoot an arrow of accusation at me, like one I have never heard before. [Not to worry; we are still friends, but at the time I was devastated, stunned, shocked, lying on the ground in my spirit, so to speak]. Can you imagine the feelings of the Lord Jesus, when He realized & pondered that one of His own, upon leaving the Last Supper, sparked by His arch-enemys, a.k.a., Satans entrance into him, went straight to the Scribes & Pharisees to sell Him, to betray Him, to hand Him over? What does this say about the Scribes & Pharisees, that, when Satan entered one of Christs disciples, the first place the latter goes is *to them!* How right Christ & John the Baptist were when they called them a brood of vipers. What else could they call them? Their father was that old serpent!

LOOK UP-GIVE UP

It goes on to say in John 12 when Jesus realized His time for His passion had come, He became troubled in spirit, whereupon the Blessed One says, My hour is come. And now My heart is troubled. And, what shall I say, Father, save Me from this hour?. But, it was *for this purpose* that I *came to* this hour. Father, glorify Your Name! In a matter of hours, He would be

betrayed, roughly handled, bound, mocked, not-sided-with by His own people to defend & protect Him from their loathsome Roman oppressors, but rather, delivered *by* them to the Romans, become the brunt of the Romans fierce hatred of the Jews via their cruel jokes, slaps to the face, blows to the face with sticks, most likely two floggings & eventually the most dreaded form of execution itself: death on a cross. What was the Saviors response in the light of this? Ill get even!. No. Youre not doing this to ME! No. I dont deserve this! No. They dont realize & appreciate Who I Am! No. Father! Send 12 legions of angels! Wipe them out! No. Rather, The Holy One of Israel looks up to His Father in the midst of all of this & exclaims, Fatherglorify Your Name!. That is, Father, reveal, display, & manifest Your glorious*perfections*, that is, how very wonderful You are, even in the midst of this wickedness, deceit, & unjust treachery that I am enduring! Jesus proper response in the face of His suffering brought the Fathers response: I have both glorified it, & will glorify it again! And that is exactly what the Father did. Through Jesus passion, God revealed in the most thorough, clear, & highest way His love, justice, wisdom, hatred of sin, shrewdness with His enemies, & infinite capacity to forgive. There *was no better or higher way* to glorify His Son, than in His gruesome death on behalf of His people. Hence, there was no higher way to glorify *Himself*, as The One Who commissioned & sent Jesus to do so!

ET TU, BRUTE?

What of us, Beloved, when weve been in similar situations, but of course, to an exponentially less degree? What would be our response? I had the chance to find out in the not-too-distant past. I attended a social gathering, whereupon entering, I greeted someone I have known for quite some time with a friendly, warm, affectionate greeting. They immediately replied with a mean-spirited, caustic, self-righteous sermonizing reply. I was so taken aback, I didnt know what to say. The flaming arrow sunk in fast & deep. What was Michaels first response? I wanted to leave! Upon further musings, I imagined comebacks to say, to rip into them. I couldnt leave this function, as much as I wanted to. Im sure it was the Spirit inside of me saying, Thank Me for this. What?! Lord, You need to NAIL them! No. Thank Me. I began to say softly under my breath, with the arrow still lodged in my heart, Thank You, Lord. Thank You. Its an incredible weapon. How so? It acknowledges Gods sovereignty in suffering, just as Jesus did. In the midst of His deepest grief & pain, Im sure still hurting not only from His recent flogging, but remembering Judas betrayal & Peters denials. Even if in His blessed perfection the Lord was *not* musing on these things?Im sure the devil was reminding Him! What did Christ tell Pilate *in the midst of* it all?

You would have no power over Me, unless it had been given to you from above. Wow. The acuteness of my pain slowly but surely subsided as time went on at this event. My heart wanted to lash out, to retaliate, to give in to hatred & get bitter, to get revenge, etc. What kind of response did God want from me? Father, glorify Your Name in this, i.e., display how wonderful You are, in this most *non-wondrous* event!. When you do so, that is where you share the sufferings of Christ, but also experience the splendid display of the Father.

WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS?

Three chapters later in John's gospel from the incident described above, our Lord gives His last I AM saying. He authoritatively declares that He is the true vine. He goes on to say, using the vine & branches metaphor, that if anyone does not remain with & abide in Him, they are taken away, thrown away, they dry up (meaning He alone is their only possible hope & source of life) gathered up (presumably by others), cast into the fire, & they are burned. Put yourself in the place of the disciples, Beloved, listening to Him! They saw Jesus sweat, bleed, get tired, hungry, eat, yawn, cry, laugh, & belch at spicy Middle-Eastern food {remember, that is a compliment in that culture!} They were aware that He used the latrine, just like them! I say that with the utmost reverence! Jesus Himself referred to the process of eliminating human waste & the purpose of the latrine in Mark 7:19! [NASB margin] What are you getting at, Michael?!. Jesus was HUMAN. 100%. And, of course, 100% divine! Surely, it wasn't until His resurrection, that the disciples had anywhere near a full-comprehension of Who was in their midst & Who they were living with! And hence, to hear Him list these dire & dreadful consequences of anyone who does not stick with Him, must have been staggering to them. Beloved? They are staggering to *me*! Woe to those who demean, slight, blaspheme, & reject Him! No one could or has given more proofs of who they were than Him! This text in John, 15:6, is another one of those soul-sobering verses that shakes me to my core in holy awe & fear. I pray it will do so for you when you read it. May it deepen & enhance your conception of Him Who also loves us so. Surely, as He also said in that same chapter, in doing so, we shall bear much fruit!

Gratefully, in The True Vine,

Michael and Kim