

**4<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

**Lord, I'm starting to 'get you'**

*(By Bruce Prewer, in Stan's absence)*

Slowly, loving Christ Jesus, I think I am at last starting 'to get you';  
I get your idiosyncratic values, your disreputable godliness.  
and your scary, incarnational immanence.

You are not merely in hyperbole but in very truth –  
the hungry African child desperate for food and drink,  
the boat-people waiting to be welcomed to a new beginning,  
the lone prisoner in the security block needing a friendly visit,  
the ill, yet prickly, neighbour who craves a helping hand,  
the street kids urgent for some warm clothing.

Lord Jesus, I think I am beginning 'to get you'.  
but am I ready to truly meet and succour you?

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy.  
Lord have mercy, on me a sinner.

Amen!

*This is an extract from 'Brief Prayers for Busy People' by Bruce Prewer (16th June - page 168).*

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**11<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

**Golgotha Faith**

*(By Bruce Prewer, in Stan's absence)*

I hack my way  
through jungle doubts  
hearing the roar  
of feral fears.

I climb that hill  
where ruins lie  
to stand where Christ  
shed bitter tears.

Up here among  
the stone and thorn  
I lift the cup  
and toast the dawn!



*This is an extract from 'Faith's Last Hurrah!' by Bruce Prewer.*

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**18<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

**St. Valentine's Day**

It might be after the event by a couple of days, but this explanation of the origins of Valentine's Day offered by a FB friend makes for good reflection.

"Happy Saint Valentine's Day." A Christian priest in Rome, Valentine was known for assisting Christians persecuted under Claudius II. After being caught marrying Christian couples and helping Christians escape the persecution, Valentine was arrested and imprisoned. Although Emperor Claudius originally liked Valentine, he was condemned to death when he tried to convert the emperor.

He was relentless in his devotion to Christ. Eventually, Valentine was beaten with stones, clubbed, and, finally, beheaded on February 14, 269. In the year 496, February 14 was named as a day of celebration in Valentine's honour.

There are many legends of Valentine — that he courageously refused to pay homage to the imperial gods faithful only to Christ, and that he was a war resister, subversively marrying young couples preventing the men from going to war (the emperor Claudius believed unmarried men made better soldiers so married men were spared the horrors of war).

And another one, Valentine became friends with the daughter of his captor. Just before he was executed, Valentine healed the blind daughter of the jailer, restoring her vision — a dazzling act of enemy-love. As the legend goes — on the day of his execution, he left the jailer's daughter a note signed: "Your Valentine"... undoubtedly sparking what has become a classic Valentine's tradition around the world.

"So let's celebrate today, through acts of subversive love as we seek to make the world a better place." That St. Valentine's Day this year coincided with Ash Wednesday, was a beneficial coincidence ... in Christian language, that might be called providence.

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**25<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

**Billy Graham**

This week the legendary Bill Graham died aged 99. I wonder what his legacy will be. For many the accolade of "good and faithful servant" will spring quickly to mind. He has been lauded as the evangelist to proclaim the gospel to more people than any other. Indeed, many many people put their trust in Jesus and commenced a journey of personal discipleship as a consequence of his crusades, particularly those of the '50s and '60s. Statistics tell us that a great many of those discontinued that journey after 12 months, but many leaders of our churches began their discipleship at one of those crusades.

But there is another side of that legacy, a darker side that must also be remembered. And perhaps the final judgement of history on Graham's legacy will be akin to the final judgement of the Bible on the great King David.

**Matthew Avery Sutton writes:**

*"Racial tensions are rising, the earth is warming, and evangelicals are doing little to help. That may be Graham's most significant, and saddest, legacy. When Billy Graham stands before the judgment seat of God, he may finally realize how badly he failed his country, and perhaps his God. On civil rights and the environmental crisis, the most important issues of his lifetime, he championed the wrong policies. The world's most famous evangelist let his apocalyptic anticipation of the coming kingdom of God blind him to the realities of living in this world."*

**Sutton is a historian. He explored Graham's early influences, and some of the shifts in his position over the years. But his final critique is strong:**

*"Graham had the opportunity to lead fundamentalists into a new era. He could have pushed them to take social reform seriously as a God-given mandate to save the world from environmental destruction. He could have tackled racism, America's original sin, by championing the federal government's aggressive civil rights policies.*

*But he squandered it. He could not overcome the speculative end-times schemes of his cohort of evangelicals, with their anti-government hostilities."*

*Graham had good intentions ... but when his influence really would have counted, when he could have effected real change, real social transformation, he was too locked into last-days fearmongering to recognize the potential of the state to do good. We are all paying the price."*

We will all leave mixed legacies behind us, no doubt, but the Bible is clear that the greater the privilege, the greater is the responsibility. I take this seriously as one who is privileged to be a minister of the Gospel. But the story of Billy Graham cautions us to be careful not to be blind-sided by narrow vision.

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