

“The grass may wither, the flower fade, but the word of our God will endure for ever.” (Isaiah 40: 8)

The readings for your perusal today are: Psalm 119: 105-112, Romans 8: 1-11 and Matthew 13: 1-9 & 18-23.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Wandering around in the dark can be scary and frustrating, for many of us today it feels as if that is what we are all doing and for many of us we believe that is what the governments are doing, but sadly too many people in the world do this each day of their lives. If you find yourself wandering about in life unsure of which way to go then learn God’s Word for it is a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path as the Psalmist says. In other words, God promises to use His Word to instruct us in the way that we are to go, one step at a time. In Church we sing about God’s guiding word all the time in our hymns with “*Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah, (guide me this) pilgrim through this barren land; I am weak, but Thou art mighty; hold me in Thy powerful hand*”. This is one of my favourite hymns, and it reminds me of the words of the Psalmist: **105** *Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path.* If it weren’t for the light of the Lord, we could only grope about in the spiritual darkness of this lost world. This means that for those without faith they end up struggling to get by each day of their lives, never happy, never satisfied with what they have in life and deep down they know but don’t want to admit it to themselves but we are reminded of this in the teachings from the Bible. The Bible teaches us that there are too many lost souls in our world today, aimlessly wandering, lost in the darkness, yet God has provided a light at the end of the tunnel, the light of salvation can only be found in and through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. For today it is about listening and remembering: **106** *I will keep my solemn promise to obey your just instructions...* **SO 108** *Accept my prayer of thanks, O Lord, and teach me your commands.* **109** *I am always ready to risk my life; I have not forgotten your law.* **110** *The wicked lay a trap for me, but I have not disobeyed your*

commands. 111 Your commandments are my eternal possession; they are the joy of my heart. 112 I have decided to obey your laws until the day I die. As Christians, we are constantly taking our life in our own hands because we profess Christ as our Lord and Saviour so we are leaving ourselves open to hostility from those who follow the ways of the world. Yet for us leaning on the strength of God and relying on his Word means that we will draw the provisions for life, unlike the ways of the world which brings nothing but condemnation.

Those who do not follow the teachings of Christ or follow God's commandments are condemned because the word of God or the law as Paul puts it brings condemnation because it points out, stimulates and condemns sin. But the Christian is no longer "under the old Mosaic law" we are instead united in and through Christ Jesus which means we are free from the bondage of sin.

1 There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit, which brings us life in union with Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death. 3 What the Law could not do, because human nature was weak, God did. Paul is a good example of a Christian using the Word of God as a weapon against Satan, because we as Christians are reminded here that we do not walk after the desires of the flesh but after the Spirit of God. If we walk after the flesh that means we are depending on ourselves, which only leads to failure and disappointment, whereas, if we walk after the Spirit that means we are depending on God and He never lets us down. Think about it when you fail (which you will, after all we all fail at things in life because we try to do things off our own backs, following our own wisdom), that does not mean you are a failure. It simply means that you do not do everything right. We all must accept the fact that we have strengths and weaknesses. So I say to you today, let Christ be strong in your weaknesses; let Him be your Strength on your weak days. Lean on God when you are not yourself. If you are waiting for the victory in an area of your life in service to God and have not yet seen it, rather than feel down about it, be patient. Do not receive condemnation but instead walk in the

Spirit that is why Paul said: **4** *God did this so that the righteous demands of the Law might be fully satisfied in us who live according to the Spirit, and not according to human nature.*

Paul reminds us today that the law was not able to overcome sin. It could point out, condemn and even stimulate sin, but it could not remove it. Christ in His incarnation became truly man, but, unlike all other men, he was sinless, he knew the temptations of the flesh, he knew the power of sin over the human body, but he was without sin, he did not give in to it, instead he conquered it on our behalf by dying on a cross of shame but rose in glory!

The Word of God is our guide to help us overcome the temptations of the flesh, to overcome the hold that sin has in our lives by guiding us to God, to Christ. It is our moral guide book which we obey out of our love for God, or we should and it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to withstand the tempter. **5** *Those who live as their human nature tells them to, have their minds controlled by what human nature wants. Those who live as the Spirit tells them to, have their minds controlled by what the Spirit wants.* **6** *To be controlled by human nature results in death; to be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace.* When the deceiver, the Devil speaks to us, he cannot give anyone peace, it is the same when we try to solve things off our own backs, we cannot find peace through our own reasoning but the mind of the Holy Spirit is life and peace.

Think about it for a moment, do you have to decide on anything today? Lay it on the “peace scale” and do not proceed if you are not at peace. You don’t have to explain to others why you are not at peace in yourself about it, sometimes you will not know why something doesn’t feel right, this is God telling you do not act yet or do not do this or that. Even when you believe God has spoken to you, you should wait to act until peace fills your soul to do what He [God] has instructed you to do. In this way you will be assured that your timing is right because the Holy Spirit will guide you.

But be warned for we know that: *Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ lives in you, the Spirit is life for you because you have been put right with God, even though your bodies are going to die because of sin. 11 If the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from death, lives in you, then he who raised Christ from death will also give life to your mortal bodies by the presence of his Spirit in you.* Sometimes when people go through hardship, they say that an event or tragedy has shaken their life, they also say that it has shaken their faith and, in some cases, it causes them to lose their faith. To quote Joyce Meyer and American Preacher – *“I say to you today the faith that can’t be shaken is the faith that has been shaken, by the experiences of life. If it is genuine faith, then it will stand up to the test that life throws at it.”*

This was what Jesus was talking about but he was also telling us that we will be tested, we will be harassed and we will struggle, but for those of us who persevere will succeed in bringing others to salvation. In the parable of the sower we find: hearing, unfruitfulness, hardness of hearts, shallowness and the deceit of Satan in causing people to listen to worldly cares compared to spiritual receptivity and abundance of fruit. But people still didn’t understand so Jesus had to explain to them:

18 *"Listen, then, and learn what the parable of the sower means. 19 Those who hear the message about the Kingdom but do not understand it are like the seeds that fell along the path. The Evil One comes and snatches away what was sown in them. 20 The seeds that fell on rocky ground stand for those who receive the message gladly as soon as they hear it. 21 But it does not sink deep into them, and they don't last long. So when trouble or persecution comes because of the message, they give up at once. 22 The seeds that fell among thorn bushes stand for those who hear the message; but the worries about this life and the love for riches choke the message, and they don't bear fruit. 23 And the seeds sown in the good soil stand for those who hear the message and understand it: they bear fruit, some as much as one hundred, others sixty, and others thirty."*

People struggle to understand the Bible for them it is too complicated, it is old language and it has nothing to do with today's modern technologically marvellous world that is full of dangers and is totally amoral. Yet how wrong can they be, the Bible's significance will never lose its appeal, its words will last forever, because they are God's inspired written word, which he has passed down to mankind through his prophets who were divinely inspired to write them down so that we can have a moral guide book to live by. Add to that the teachings of Christ in the New Testament part of the Bible and we end up saying out loud and or repeat to ourselves what the Psalmist expressed when he said: **105** *Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path...* so as another favourite Hymn puts it: "*send the light the blessed Gospel light and truly let it shine forevermore*", let it shine through us and our work done in His name...Amen.

PRAYER

Shine Jesus Shine come into our hearts today we pray, we need your love and your light to guide us in this dark and scary world in which we live. We pray Lord for your guidance in our lives, we ask you to guide our words, our thoughts and our actions today so that we can be a blessing in your name to all those we meet. Help us Lord to shine brightly wherever we are so that others will know that you live through our witness.

We pray today Lord for all those who are lost and are wandering around in spiritual darkness today, we pray that the light of your love will enter their hearts, minds and souls today so that they may find your peace as we who believe have found your peace.

Jesus, we ask in your holy name to bring healing to those who are sick, physically, emotionally, and spiritually today. Bless and give strength to our doctors and nurses and to all the key workers in our society as they look after and provide for us, keep them safe we pray, just as we do our best to look after those around us. Guide the leaders of our governments so that

they can make wise and courageous decisions which will help the people of our nations. We ask and pray for a cure for Covid 19 and for the people of the world to come to you in prayer seeking forgiveness for their sins, so that they will find your peace. Amen