

“we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

Today’s readings for your perusal if you wish to read them are: Psalm 116: 1-2 & 12-19, Romans 5: 1-8 and Matthew 9: 35-38 & 10: 1-8.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY - HOPE

Paul was in prison a lot for his faith and trust in Jesus. He never gave up hope, for he knew that Christ was with him always, and for Christians around the world this is still the case. The hope in the Lord is what keeps us going and we see this in the Psalm. The Psalm or Hymn to God is one where the writer is praying to God for deliverance from death, he was facing a moment of crisis in his life which could end up with him dying, but because he was a man of faith, he prayed to God because he knew that God was with him as He is with us today, this is what he said: *I love the Lord, because he hears me; he listens to my prayers. 2 He listens to me every time I call to him.* The Psalmist is saying quite clearly that in Him [God] I will trust and my prayers will ever be to Him – in other words this is a declaration of faith and trust in God which is repeated throughout the Bible by men and women of faith and especially is seen in the Psalms.

The Psalmist also asks a pertinent question: *What can I offer the Lord for all his goodness to me?* It is a serious question and one which the Psalmist tries also to answer. *13 I will bring a wine offering to the Lord, to thank him for saving me. 14 In the assembly of all his people I will give him what I have promised.* The NKJV puts verse 13 as *“I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.”* This cup of salvation refers to the cup that is used during the Passover festival and the cup symbolises the thankful offering of the peoples praise to God which is followed by a meal also of celebration which again focuses on the deliverance by the Lord our God. As men and women of faith we realise that our lives are precious to God, that is why we give Him thanks

for all that he has done for us. That is why like the Psalmist we renew ourselves daily in His presence to His service through our prayers strengthening our faith and determination to live our lives according to His will and teachings and thereby bringing hope to those around us.

But the Psalmist also knew: *15 How painful it is to the Lord when one of his people dies! 16 I am your servant, Lord; I serve you just as my mother did. You have saved me from death. 17 I will give you a sacrifice of thanksgiving and offer my prayer to you. 18-19 In the assembly of all your people, in the sanctuary of your Temple in Jerusalem, I will give you what I have promised. Praise the Lord!* We all know the pain of losing a loved one, and none more so for those who have lost loved ones in this time of pandemic. But it is painful to God also when someone dies not physically as it means they are now with God in heaven, but here the Psalmist is referring to when someone dies to God, in other words they have turned their back on Him and ignore His teachings. We know them as Atheist's and anyone else who denies Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Yet the Bible teaches us that God carefully watches over all of us and He does this because we are highly precious to Him, we are His children and just like a loving parent He doesn't want to lose us because *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. Or "precious shall their blood be in his sight."* As we are His anointed His disciples, His followers we do our best to serve Him just like our parents and grandparents did, if they had faith and were believers. Notice though in verse 17 how the Psalmist says that he will call on the name of the Lord, but only after he has offered the sacrifice of thanksgiving. How many times have we attempted to call on the power of the name of Jesus to help us, while at the same time our lives were full of complaining instead of thankfulness? As human beings we find that we are prone to complaining because we are weak sinful human beings and yet we also realise that there is no power in complaining, it doesn't get us anywhere. Complaining is not positive it has no good power in it, all it has is bad negative power lies, that is why we feel unfulfilled when all we do is complain.

However, if we want God's power to be released in our lives, we will have to stop complaining as the Psalmist did and instead be thankful for what He has done for us.

Paul knew this truth for himself and so wrote to the church in Rome. *5 Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* This was not a subjective feeling of peace; in other words, it gave us peace of mind. This peace that we have through Christ is a primarily an objective status, this is because we are now in a new relationship with God, through our faith and trust in Christ. It is because of that we now are no longer strangers to God, we have not died to Him, we have not turned our backs on Him, instead we have come back home. When you have been away even for a short while we all know that when you come back home you are able to rest and find peace. With Christ when we come home, we find this peace or contentment of the soul and Paul tells us; *2 He has brought us by faith into this experience of God's grace, in which we now live. And so we boast of the hope we have of sharing God's glory!*

Here today we find that Jesus our Lord and Saviour ushers us into the presence of God. The heavy curtain that was in the temple which separated man from God and God from man has now been both physically and spiritually removed by the death and resurrection of Christ. This means that we have the confidence and strength of faith knowing that the purpose for which God created us will now be ultimately realised in and through Jesus Christ. IN and THROUGH Jesus in that His death on the cross of Calvary and his glorious resurrection has brought us into a right relationship with our Heavenly Father once more, so we should give thanks to God for that on its own. We are encouraged to give thanks to God for our troubles always as Paul tells us: *3 We also boast of our troubles, because we know that trouble produces endurance, 4 endurance brings God's approval, and his approval creates hope. 5 This hope does not disappoint us, for God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to us.* We have not to glory in our suffering or complain about it all the time, but instead through faith we are to give

thanks to God for our troubles. Strange to say it this way, but for the man and woman of faith it means that we can rejoice in the suffering or hardships we face because as men and women of faith we know that it is not meaningless, it is part of God's purpose for us because through our suffering, we rely on Him for strength and through it we become stronger more able people. It brings about character in the believer, which in turn allows us to be better able to serve and speak to others because we have suffered maybe similar to others meaning we can communicate to them through Christ and share His love, grace and mercy, after all: *6 For when we were still helpless, Christ died for the wicked at the time that God chose. 7 It is a difficult thing for someone to die for a righteous person. It may even be that someone might dare to die for a good person. 8 But God has shown us how much he loves us—it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!* When we first believed in Christ, the Holy Spirit poured out His love in our hearts, and His love for us continues to dwell in us. Christ's love is grounded in God's free grace and is not the result of any inherent worthiness found in us but despite our failings and weakness, it was lavished on us by a loving Heavenly Father which took Him to a lonely death on a cross of wood so we can live. So, again let us give thanks to God for that free gift of life. This gift of life was what brought Jesus to us.

35 Jesus went around visiting all the towns and villages. He taught in the synagogues, preached the Good News about the Kingdom, and healed people with every kind of disease and sickness. 36 As he saw the crowds, his heart was filled with pity for them, because they were worried and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 So he said to his disciples, "The harvest is large, but there are few workers to gather it in. 38 Pray to the owner of the harvest that he will send out workers to gather in his harvest." We are called to work in the harvest field of this world, so give thanks to God for the opportunity to serve and pray for guidance and strength to serve in whatever way the Spirit guides. Just as Jesus gave authority to his disciples to heal and bring hope so He too has given us the same authority so that through our witness and our prayers we may bring hope where there is none and bring peace and love. As the words of the

hymn puts it “The Spirit lives to set us free walk, walk in the light” so go forth and be a shining light in this dark world!

PRAYER

Lord we sing in church about the light of your love shining, but today for many they struggle to see that light, they struggle to see hope or feel peace. Help us today Lord we pray to find your peace. Help us to pray for those around us who are struggling to cope with the Covid 19 pandemic and the lockdown restrictions. We see many people going out of their ways to help neighbours by manning foodbanks or preparing or making meals to be sent to those who are vulnerable for these people we give you our thanks today and ask your blessing on them.

We also sadly look to the recent anger in our society over racism and we see and fear for all those people who have gone out to protest and risk their health and the health of those around them to make a stand against injustice and unfair treatment of our fellow man and woman. We pray in Jesus name for peace and harmony to resume, we pray that you will open the people's hearts and minds to your teachings so that we can love our neighbour as we love ourselves. Help us through our prayers today to bring healing to our nation and to our people.

Father, guide those in authority to make wise decisions, grant your wisdom to all of us so that we can find solutions to our problems and let us turn to you for your Wisdom. Father it is your Word that heals and guides, too many have turned from your Wisdom and Words and we are now reaping the bad harvest of unfaith and unbelief. Yet Lord we pray that through all of these protests that wisdom will reign, and peace will ensue, guide the people Lord, grant them peace and the strength to find a peaceful and meaningful answer.

Protect the police Lord and the emergency services workers who have to face the troubles that this fear and unrest causes. Help

them to be strong in you. Bless them and all the fantastic work they do in looking after and caring for us. Guide our words and our actions Lord, let us be a light shining in the darkness, help us to bring hope and show your love always we pray. Amen.