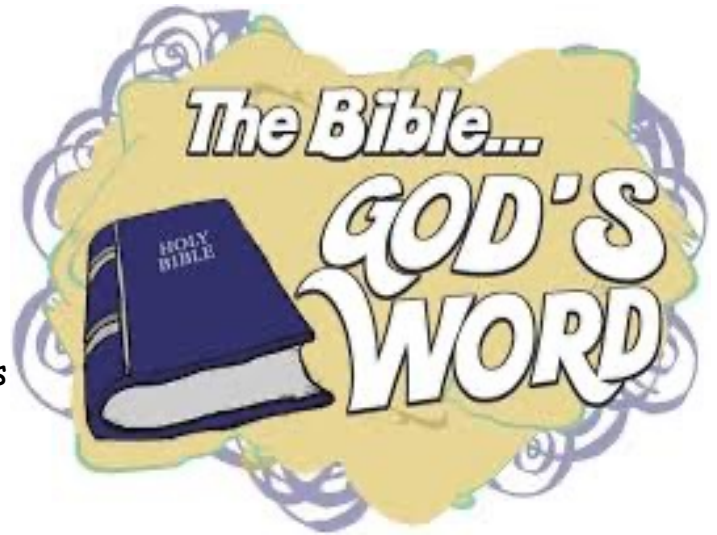


Worship At Home

17th March 2024

Psalm 119 ⁹⁻¹⁶

"How can a person live a clean life?
By carefully reading the map of your Word.
I'm single-minded in pursuit of you; don't let me
miss the road signs you've posted.
I've banked your promises in the vault of my
heart so I won't sin myself bankrupt.
Be blessed, GOD; train me in your ways of wise
living.
I'll transfer to my lips all the counsel that comes
from your mouth; I delight far more in what you
tell me about living than in gathering a pile of
riches. I ponder every morsel of wisdom from
you, I attentively watch how you've done it.
I relish everything you've told me of life, I won't
forget a word of it."



*Find a comfortable position to sit or lie down in.
(Take a deep breath in through your nose and let it out through your mouth.)
When you are ready, say out loud or in your head...
'Lord, I come into your presence.' (Breathe in...breathe out...)
I come just as I am. (Breathe in...breathe out...)
I bring everything I have experienced this past week - the things I'm proud of, and the
things I wish had been different. (Breathe in...breathe out...)
I bring the people that enriched my week, and the people I found it hard to share my
week with. (Breathe in...breathe out...)
I bring the moments of joy, peace, pride, sorrow, frustration, regret and pain. (Breathe
in...breathe out...)
I bring my hopes for next week. (Breathe in...breathe out...)
I lay all of these things at your feet, and rest in your loving presence.*

[When you are ready say the Lord's prayer] Amen.

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - MP1272 From the breaking of the dawn

- ¹ From the breaking of the dawn To the setting of the sun, CCLI5044394
I will stand on every promise of Your word.
Words of power, strong to save, That will never pass away,
I will stand on every promise of Your word. For Your covenant is sure,
And on this I am secure, I can stand on every promise of Your word.
- ² When I stumble and I sin, Condemnation pressing in,
I will stand on every promise of Your word. You are faithful to forgive,
That in freedom I might live. So, I stand on every promise of Your word.
Guilt to innocence restored: You remember sins no more!
So, I'll stand on every promise of Your word.
- ³ When I'm faced with anguished choice, I will listen for Your voice,
And I'll stand on every promise of Your word. Through this dark and troubled land
You will guide me with your hand, As I stand on every promise of Your word.
And you've promised to complete, every work begun in me,
So, I'll stand on every promise of Your word.

[Prayer comes from Vine at Home,
17th March 2024]

<https://youtu.be/kMug5z1uaMo?si=fyMr-XLcoKgjRZCbJ>

PTO

⁴ Hope that lifts me from despair, Love that casts out every fear,
As I stand on every promise of Your word. Not forsaken, not alone,
For the Comforter has come, And I stand on every promise of Your word.
Grace sufficient, grace for me, Grace for all who will believe,
We will stand on every promise of Your word.

Let us pray,

We praise you, O God, not only with our hearts, but with our minds - indeed - with every part of our lives. We praise you for being our God and for claiming us as your people. As your people. Such easy words to say and yet such astounding words to own. You - great Creator of the universe - acknowledge that each person is special to you. We shake our heads in disbelief at such an unlikely action - and yet - you have proved its truth through the person of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour and Lord. He even went to the length of dying to demonstrate the depth of his love for us - the intensity of divine love for all humanity. Accept our worship, gracious God, for we offer it with glad and grateful hearts, hearts energised and renewed by our relationship with you.

We continue to pray using the words of Psalm 51 ...

Lord God, have mercy on us, You are a God of steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy blot out all our wrongdoings. Hear our words of confession of our sins and then cleanse us from all those sins...

We know all too well, when we do sin, that we do it against you, O God. When we do wrong in your sight, You are justified in your judgment of our misdeeds. You desire truth in all we think, and do and say; therefore, etch your wisdom on the innermost places of our hearts. Wash and scrub our sins away until we are free from imperfection. *Silently we confess.*

Create in us clean hearts, O God, and put a new and right spirit within us. Do not cast us from your presence and do not take your Holy Spirit from us. Restore to us the joy of your salvation and sustain in us a willing spirit so that we can respond joyfully to your intention for our lives. In Jesus' name we pray.

As we hear the good news: Jesus, having been made perfect, became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. (Hebrews 5:9) And so I declare to you: in Jesus Christ, we are renewed, we are cleansed, we are forgiven. Hallelujah. **Amen**

Reading: Jeremiah 31: 31-34 and John 12:20-33

Reflection: Sayings of the heart

There is a huge number of sayings about the heart my *Dictionary*, listing these sayings which range from 'after one's own heart - appealing to one's taste or affection' - to 'to cry one's heart out - or eat one's heart out - to have a change of heart - lose one's heart, set one's heart on, to wear one's heart on one's sleeve' etc., etc. If you take some of them literally they certainly

sound pretty strange. Then you can find definitions from heartache to heart- warm. One can conclude from these examples that the heart plays a pretty important role in life - not just physically, but metaphorically also. That is not too difficult to understand, as from the earliest literature written the heart has been seen as the seat, the source of one's emotions and feelings. If you put your whole heart into doing something - then it's pretty likely that all aspects of your being will be used to accomplish whatever the task is.





It appears that the people of the Old Testament who received the ten commandments as the law of the covenant which bound them to God - were not putting their whole heart into keeping the commandments. Obeying the commandments seems to have become a sterile, life-less act or duty. Life and death in the OT had a different meaning from simply being alive or not being alive.

Life meant to be significantly involved in a community of caring, meaning and action, whereas death meant to be excluded from such a community or denied access to its caring or meaning. Life meant a capacity to enter into covenants and the ability to make covenants that offered community - creating life-giving possibilities for others.

So, when Jeremiah prophesies that God will put his law in the people's minds and write it on their hearts, he is describing a movement from death to life. He is pointing out the difference between a God who lays down commandments to be meticulously obeyed and dutifully followed, and one who writes the law on our hearts. Our behaviour, if we are to take Jeremiah seriously, is not a matter of a sterile act or duty but is to be shaped by love. The Pharisees did their duty superbly. Jesus laid down his life out of love.

Sterile duty derives from the desire to appear righteous. The desire to love as Christ did arises from a spontaneous movement of a transformed person from within, to the world. Life, in the bible then, means relatedness, an action of the heart, whereas death means to be unrelated, excluded, rejected. Jesus puts the question of life and death to God's people. He is a bringer of news, but it is both good news and bad news. He announces good news to those who believed that life was nothing but a grinding, hopeless burden to be endured. He announced the good news to the poor and the powerless, the lepers, the demon possessed, all who were outcasts, whom the community had banished and in fact had declared dead. The resurrection power of Jesus is empowerment and restoration for those who believed they were dead. And do not believe that there are no poor, or powerless, or excluded, or outcasts in our society - there are all kinds of victims - and we can only discover who they are when we venture out to listen, to be merciful, to have the courage to love.

Jesus the life bringer also brought bad news. To those people who presumed that life was an enduring gift that need only be protected and hoarded for one's own benefit he brought the news that such life will be lost.

The passage from John's gospel is about the change that the grain of wheat has to undergo - radical change - before it experiences new life and this is what Jesus is saying has to happen to us if we are to experience any kind of new life also. Jesus showed us that new life has to be one that points us outward, away from self towards those who do not seem to be experiencing quality of life at all.

William Barclay writes that Jesus was saying that the grain of wheat was ineffective and unfruitful so long as it was preserved in safety and security. It was when it was buried in the ground that it bore fruit. Sometimes it is only when we bury our personal desires & ambitions that we can be of use to God. William Barclay adds, no doubt we may exist longer if we take things easily, if we look after our own needs and close our eyes to the needs of others - no doubt we shall exist longer, but we will never really live at all. What Jesus taught, he also embodied. The way to Easter is Good Friday. The victory of resurrection requires the vulnerability of crucifixion. "I tell you the truth" said Jesus "unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."³ How do we put our hearts and souls into such a task? Our next hymn gives us the answer.

Let us pray,

God of all, we thank you for your Son Jesus who knew when His time had come to suffer. We thank you that He was willing to die for us. We thank you that He defeated death and lives in us and through us.

We ask that the time will come soon when all people will live in peace and have true respect for others. We ask for a time of peace across the world in many nations including Gaza, Israel, Palestine, Ukraine and Haiti. We ask for a time of respect between people, where all realise that the word's they use may cause upset, harm or danger to others. We pray for a world where hurtful language and insults can be challenged and taken seriously. We ask for a time when suffering at the hands of others will end.

God of all people in our nations, we thank you that you are our awesome God, our creator and leader, and our friend. We thank you that you have given us guides to help us live well and shown us how to show care and compassion.

We pray for a time when compassion is shown to all people by all leaders, and that we too may have compassion for them. We pray for a time of peace and refuge for the royal family in the health and relationship issues that they are going through under the public gaze. We pray for a time of wisdom and compassion from our politicians as they balance political views with the needs of all people. We pray for a time when our leaders would be a positive example of wisdom and grace, and we pray for unity and hope in our struggling communities.

We pray for a time of care and compassion in meeting the needs of those round us, and through that sharing the joy of knowing you. We pray for healing and hope for those who are suffering through illness and sadness at this time, and forgiveness for those who feel guilt and regret. We pray for that time when pain will end, and joy will come. **Amen**

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 357 This is my will, my one command

- ¹ This is my will, my one command, that love should dwell among you all.
This is my will, that you should love as I have shown that I love you.
- ² No greater love a man can have than that he die to save his friends.
You are my friends if you obey all I command that you should do.
- ³ I call you now no longer slaves; no slave knows all his master does.
I call you friends, for all I hear my Father say you hear from me.
- ⁴ You chose not me, but I chose you, that you should go and bear much fruit.
I called you out that you in me should bear much fruit that will abide.
- ⁵ All that you ask my Father dear for my name's sake you shall receive.
This is my will, my one command, that love should dwell in each, in all.

CCL15044394

https://youtu.be/-OXw6Lhs7u8?si=vjZ_Z8sCHDFRpd

*May you go out with joy and be sent forth with peace. May the Spirit of God go with you, that you might be a person of peace to all who you meet this week. May you know the light of love in your life, And trust in Jesus every step of the way,
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all evermore. **Amen.***

Thank you to those who have taken the time to contact me. Take care out there this week. May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and each day.

Rev. Susan Thorburn, sthorburn@churchofscotland.org.uk

If you choose to email me, please can you tell me who you are and where you live. Thank you.