

A BLESSED LIFE– Sunday December 2nd 2012.

*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
² But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
³ He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers. (Psalm 1:1-3)*

Beloved in the Lord,

Today we begin a new Church year, it is the first Sunday in Advent. As we begin a new stage in life, or as we move to a new year it is always good to pause and ponder the question what will be my guide in this next phase of life? Who will I look to for guidance and help? There really are only two paths that we can take – God’s way or our way. God’s way is to submit to God’s authority and be led by Him. Our way is not really our way at all, because if we are not led by God, then more or less we are led by Satan. If we are not in Christ Jesus, then we are slaves to the Devil.

As we begin a new Church year we take a closer look at Psalm 1. Psalm 1 has the title: “The Righteous and The wicked contrasted.” Some translations have Two paths for life.

There are only two paths which we can take – God’s path or the Devil’s path. Jesus put it this way: **“He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.”** (Mt.12:30)

Jesus does not give any other option. Either we are with Him or against Him. Partial obedience is disobedience.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to live for God in this sinful world. There is constant pressure being applied to Christians to water down the message, to compromise, to make the Word of God more acceptable and less offensive to people. We live in a time when people’s lives are controlled by feelings. People live by their desires and follow after their lusts. If it feels good, if you want it, do it. That goes a long way towards explaining why we are in the mess that we are in.

So many people are trying to live with a foot in each Kingdom. One in the world and the other in God’s Kingdom. But this is not acceptable. Jesus said: **“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”** (Mt.6:24)

Please note that Jesus clearly said that “No one can serve two masters.” It is not possible. To try to serve God and the world is like standing with one foot in one boat and the other in another boat. Each boat starts moving in the opposite direction and you fall into the water. Please be absolutely clear on this. You cannot serve God and wealth. You cannot serve God and the world. You must choose.

Psalms 1 helps us to make an informed choice. The psalmist uses a very easy to understand illustration. The man who serves God is like a tree that is planted by a good source of flowing water. This tree bears beautiful and consistent fruit at the right time and its leaves are neither dry nor withered. Even in times of intense heat this tree bears up because it has its roots in the water source.

Paul in his letter to the Colossians wrote: ***“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.***

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. ⁹ For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;” (Col.2:6-10)

Paul is encouraging us to be deeply and firmly rooted in Christ Jesus, in the Word of God. We need to have our faith planted and deeply rooted in the rich soil of God’s Holy and unfailing Word.

God’s Word is like that stream of living water that gives life to us. This water causes our tree to be strong and fruitful, to flourish wherever we are, to bear fruit for God’s Kingdom and so bring glory to His Holy name.

Our aim, as we enter a new Church year should be to grow in such a way that our last works are greater than our first. Our aim should be to daily grow in the grace and knowledge of God. To grow in His power and wisdom and love.

In order to achieve this we must remain in Christ, deeply rooted in Him, walking in the power of The Holy Spirit every day. We need to be in the Word daily. Reading His Word every day. I cannot over emphasize this point.

In the text from Colossians there is a warning given to us by Paul. ***“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”*** We are warned to be alert and not to be deceived. If we are not strong in the Word of God, then we can be easily deceived. False prophets, false preachers and teachers have always been and will always be. There are many who have led people astray with their vain

philosophies and empty deceptions. There are so many that water down the Word of God, they twist the meaning and interpret it to suit their own vain philosophies and ideas. They twist the Word to fit in with their thoughts and desires, to make it more palatable.. They go by their “feelings” rather than what God says, and so deceive not only themselves, but also all those who listen to them.

A few weeks ago I was in New Zealand and whilst in Wellington I visited my mother’s grave. As I stood there I thanked God for the wonderful inheritance I received from my mother and grandparents. This inheritance was not money or property. Oh no, it is something far more valuable. They taught me to love and to respect The Word of God as Truth. They taught me to pray and to trust in God, to place Him first and foremost in my life. This has been an inheritance far more valuable than silver or gold.

You see, the truth is that if you love God, if you love The Bible and submit to its authority, if you place God first and foremost in your life, He takes care of the rest. Hallelujah.

Jesus put it this way: **“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”** (Matthew 6:33)

Do you believe that? I do! When I have sought first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, God has always been faithful to provide. Without fail.

I urge you, encourage you, plead with you: Seek first the Kingdom of God in this Church Year. Put Him first. Not second or third or if I have a chance or think of it. No put Him first and you will see that: ***How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!² But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.***

None of us knows what this new Church year will bring. What changes there will be. I do know one thing, God will be faithful to His Word. He will do as He has promised. He will not fail. He will not change, His Word will not change. **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”** (Hebrews 13:8)

Let us make a commitment today, to be that tree planted by the waters. Let us allow God to take us by the hand and lead us every step of the way. Let us be thankful everyday for His amazing Grace and love which He bestows upon us through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Everyday let us remind ourselves that: **“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”** (John 3:16)

Let the truth of the Gospel permeate our hearts, bring us freedom and joy and then let us be God’s light that shines in a dark world bringing the Truth to all people.

We do not have to look far to find people who are on the wrong path in life. So many lives are like chaff. There is no substance, and the wind blows them away.

Let us set our own house in order first and then let us be the light that shines. There is no greater witness to the Truth than our own lives. When others see that our leaves do not wither, that the fruit on our tree is good and that everything we do prospers, that will draw them to Christ.

I close with a reminder from Paul as to how this fruit looks: (Galatians 5:22-23)

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

May God bless this new Church Year!

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.