

One in Christ Jesus – 09 /02/2017

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Gal.3:26-28

Beloved in the Lord, recently, Linda and I have seen a couple of movies, which have been based on historical events, and which have highlighted the struggle that has existed between people of different races, especially black and white. The first film was “United Kingdom”, which was about Prince Seretse Khama from Botswana. Whilst studying in London in the 1940’s he fell in love and subsequently married Ruth – a white English lady. This sent shock waves through both his own community and England, as at the time Botswana was under English sovereignty and Seretse was the successor to the throne of his late father. Segregation was in place in South Africa and the British didn’t want to upset the South Africans. Seretse took Ruth to his homeland and it took a long time before she was accepted by the black community. There was racial suspicion and hatred on both sides. Eventually however love won the day and Ruth was accepted and loved by the Africans and Seretse became the first president of the independent state of Botswana.

What was significant was the bond of love between Seretse and Ruth, and that their commitment to each other eventually broke down the awful barrier of racial discrimination and segregation.

The other movie was “Hidden Figures” which was about three Negro women working at Nasa in the late 50’s and 60’s. At the time, West Virginia still practiced segregation. These three women were very gifted in their fields and with time, they overcame both the racial and sexual discrimination that was in place, and went on to be pioneers at Nasa, leaving behind a significant mark in history. What came across so powerfully in this movie was the awfulness and wrongness of discrimination against people based on colour or sex.

Both films left a deep impact on me and prompted me to take a good hard look at my own thoughts and values. I asked God to show me if I was harbouring any prejudices and if so to forgive me and change my heart.

All people are created by God and no-one is higher or lower than anyone else. All men are created equal. Every soul is precious to God and every person has his or her role to play. Everyone is part of God’s plan. We must not discriminate on a person’s colour, race, language, or any other category. We are to love all people, and to view them as God does, per His standard.

God has only two categories of people – those that are His children by faith in Jesus Christ, and those that are not. There is no other distinction. God loves both categories. Jesus shed His Blood for all people. He died on the cross for all people.

“For 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)

The way to God is the same for all people. It makes no difference if you are Black or White, Asian, Australian, Latvian, Indian, Russian, Korean, whether you are rich or poor; educated or uneducated; Hindu, Buddhist, Jew or Muslim; - God loves you and the way to Him is Jesus Christ.

Jesus taught: ***“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas *said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus *said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:1-6)***

There are not many ways, there is one way and that way is the same for all people. It is important that we truly grasp this fact. It is God’s desire for all men to be saved, for Jesus died for all. We read: ***“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2. Pet.3:9)*** Very clearly stated. Sadly, not all come to Him.

Our commission, as God’s children, is to love all people, and to be God’s light to all men everywhere. Even though we cannot always speak someone else’s language, there is a universal language that requires no words and that is love. Love can be expressed with a smile; a helping hand; a welcoming gesture; your general demeanour.

We are to love all people.

I love what John sees and hears and describes in the Book of Revelation. He sees people from all nations gathered around the Throne of God. Jesus the Lamb of God is being worshipped. John hears this song: ***“Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.” (Rev.5:9)***

Please note that Heaven will be filled with people from ***every tribe and tongue and people and nation***. That is important. It tells us that God does not discriminate and that we must widen our scope of thinking. As Christians, we are not to be inward looking, caring only for our own. We must have a universal mindset. Jesus taught His disciples: ***“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Mt.28:18-20)***

This commission was given not only to the disciples; but also to us. We all stand under the great commission.

I believe that there are two very concrete ways we can all do our bit to obey this commission. The first one is prayer. Prayer has no boundaries. We should be praying daily for the spread of the Gospel around the world. When we pray, we should broaden our prayers to include not only our family and friends, but also evangelists, missionaries, pastors, churches. Pray for those who go into the darkest places in the world proclaiming the Gospel.

Prayer is a very powerful thing. I must admit that I haven't always been as diligent in praying as I should be, and so this is a call to action for me as well as you. We need to pray for those who are lost as well as for those who are trying to reach them.

On the news, we usually only see the bad and negative things that are happening around the world. There is however good news coming out of places like China, Iran, Iraq and Israel where many are turning to Christ. Christianity is growing in those areas where it is most persecuted. A while ago I read about the conundrum the Chinese authorities are facing with the rapid growth of Christianity. The communist party is strongly opposed to true Christianity, yet they see that in areas that are strongly populated by Christians, people are happy, and more productive, and crime is practically non-existent. This is creating headaches for the authorities.

With technology like satellites the Gospel is now penetrating areas in the Middle East where it has been virtually impossible to send missionaries. Many are turning to Christ. We need to pray that God would continue to open the doors, and to pray for protection over those whose lives are in danger.

We also need to pray for our own people. We don't have to look far to find Godless Latvians and Australians. We pray that God would open their hearts.

The second way that we can support global ministry is by donating funds. Nothing can be done without finances.

As a congregation, we are supporting several institutions in Latvia, such as orphanages and soup kitchens. We are also supporting ministry and outreach in Indonesia and elsewhere. That is good and we are being blessed in return, but I believe that we need to do more. God says in His Word: ***"Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed."* (2 Cor.9:6-8)**

May we be cheerful givers and sow many seeds in God's Kingdom.

May God help us to see as He sees, and to love as He loves. Amen.

Pastor Colvin MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.

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