

Serve Him in truth– Sunday June 2nd 2013.

Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. (1.Samuel 12:24)

Beloved in the Lord,

Many people are slaves to false gods and religions, thinking that they serve the true God, but in reality they are serving an idol. Many people are slaves to religion, but do not serve God in truth.

I have just returned from Jakarta Indonesia, where this reality is so clear. So many are enslaved in false religion. As I lay in my hotel bed in the morning, I was awoken every morning around 4.30am by the call to prayer that came from the Mosque. It was time for Muslims to rise and begin the day in prayer, the first of five such times in a day. So many millions of people in Indonesia alone, are slaves to a false religion, they are serving a lie.

Our text today are words spoken by Samuel the prophet to the nation of Israel at the time when they had asked God for a king to rule over them. This desire to have a king was in many ways a rejection of God. Israel wanted to be like all other nations that had a king. They were wanting to place their trust in a man and no longer God alone.

Man very quickly slips away from God, from the one true service, to clinging to a man, a Church, a religious movement. We have to be ever vigilant that our trust and focus is on Jesus alone all of the time. Our hope should be in Jesus and Jesus alone.

Let us go deeper into our text today as we consider three things that arise from it:

1. We are to fear The Lord.
2. We are to serve Him in truth
3. We are to remember and be thankful for all that He has done.

Firstly: We are to fear The Lord.

Samuel wrote: ***“Only fear The Lord...”***

Fear of the Lord should be at the foundation of our life and faith. Any person that does not fear the Lord, who is not submitted to Him in faith, is under a curse. On the other hand the person who does fear the Lord and serve Him in truth, that person is blessed in all that he does.

In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther begins each of his explanations of the Ten Commandments with the words: “We are to fear and love the Lord.”

This is the very foundation of all that we are and all that we do. God is God. He alone is Lord of all. So many have strayed from this truth today and are placing themselves above God

and His Holy Word. Remember He is the Potter and we are the clay and not the other way around.. He created us, we did not create Him. His will is to be done, not God acquiesce to our will and desires.

To fear God does not mean to be frightened of Him, but to reverence Him. It is not to live in fear of punishment at every turn. Jesus took our punishment and paid our sin debt in full on the cross of Calvary. Jesus has paid for our sins with His own precious blood. He did this so that we may live as children of Almighty God.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13)

When we receive Jesus into our hearts as Lord and Saviour then we become children of God. Jesus blood washes away all our sin, past, present and future, and we are saved from eternal death and guaranteed eternal life in Heaven.

As children of God, we reverence and respect and honour our Father with every aspect of our lives. That is what it means to fear God. We strive to obey Him in love. We take His Word seriously and we humbly submit ourselves to His Word and His will. So then we are to fear The Lord.

Secondly we are to serve Him in Truth.

Our text tells us to serve god in truth with all of our heart. Jesus said that He is Truth:

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6)

Jesus is The Truth, and the only Truth. In order to serve God in truth, we must come to Him in Jesus. Mohammed cannot help us, Buddha cannot help us, Krishna cannot help us, The Virgin Mary cannot help us, The saints of old cannot help us, Peter cannot help us, Augustine or any of the Church fathers cannot help us, ONLY JESUS. Jesus is The Way. There is no other way, no other path to God, no other door. He alone is TRUTH. He Alone is the Way to God the Father and in Him Alone is Life eternal.

Jesus once said to the Jews that had begun to follow Him:

“If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

The Jews were slaves to religion. Jesus said that He came to set them free. When we receive Him, then He sets us free. We know the truth and the truth sets us free. This freedom is complete and true. Jesus said:

“So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36)

In Christ Jesus we have true freedom, and the more we grow in Him, the greater our freedom. We are freed from all that enslaves us and our lives begin to reflect His love and glory more and more.

Whilst in Jakarta, I had the opportunity to visit the world's third largest Mosque. I was amazed by the sheer size of it, and the number of people enslaved by false religion. We crossed the road and visited the Catholic Cathedral, and interestingly the feeling was exactly the same. There are millions of people sitting in Churches around the world that are enslaved by religion. They do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. There are many who call themselves Christian, and go through the motions, but they are not free in Christ, because they do not know Him, they have not accepted Him into their hearts as Lord and Saviour. This is the great tragedy, that so many think that belonging to a Church, doing the Churchy things, will save them. Only faith in Jesus Christ, only His blood shed for you, can save you from sin and death. Christ Alone, Faith Alone.

Let's have another look at our text:

“ Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. “

We are to serve Him with all of our heart. A lukewarm service and faith is about as good as a half cooked sausage. No good for anything.

Every morning as I lay in bed in Jakarta, when I heard the call to prayer, I felt a strong need to get up and pray to the One True God. I discussed with some of the others that I could not help but wonder where we would be as Christians, if we prayed to God five times a day. If we really took our faith seriously and really worked at it. If we stopped thinking in terms of holy moments, and thought more about Holy Living. Paul calls us to pray not only five times a day, but to pray all the time! We read in 1 Thessalonians 5:17: ***“pray without ceasing;”***.

Let us serve God with all of our heart and always in truth. Let us love Him with all of our being, because He first loved us.

This brings me to my third and final point, namely: We are to remember and be thankful for all that He has done.

This is vital. It is so important to remember and to be thankful. When we praise and thank God we draw near to Him and we honour Him. This in turn strengthens our faith. When we remember what God has done and we praise and thank Him, it helps us to focus in the right direction. We take our eyes off ourselves and fix our sights on Jesus. David wrote in Psalm

103: 1-4 “Bless the Lord, O my soul,

And all that is within me, bless His holy name.

² Bless the Lord, O my soul,

And forget none of His benefits;

**³ Who pardons all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases;
⁴ Who redeems your life from the pit,
Who crowns you with loving-kindness and compassion; “**

We have so very much to thank God for. The main thing is that His love and Grace are new every morning. He has loved us with an everlasting love, best expressed in Jesus own words:

“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

There is enough here to keep us praising and thanking Him for the rest of our lives and for eternity. He has so loved us, that He shed His own blood, gave His own life as payment for our sin debt. Jesus did it so that we could spend eternity with Him in Heaven.

He has done great things for us and continues to do so. May we be thankful every day. We live in so much abundance, we are well off and yet so often we grumble and complain. This is so wrong. We need to change.

Let's write today's text on our hearts and let us strive to bring God glory and honour every day.

“ Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.”

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.