

Why follow Jesus? – Sunday September 22nd 2013.

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. ³ This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. (1.Timothy 2:1-6)

Beloved in the Lord,

Pontius Pilate asked Jesus – “What is truth?”. What he didn’t realise was that he was staring at the Truth. Jesus is Truth. Jesus said: ““I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6)

These words of Jesus are extremely important. We live in a time when people no longer know the truth. We live in a time when there seem to be no absolutes. Truth is whatever you want it to be. Everyone does his or her own thing and seemingly that is ok. It seems to me that with every day we are sliding further and further away from God, and so consequently further from the only Truth there is. The Ten Commandments are no longer the foundation of our thinking and behaviour. People are choosing what to believe in, what not to believe in. Nothing is black and white anymore. Many have abandoned God’s Word completely and are living by who knows what.

In the midst of all this mess Jesus comes along and simply says: “Follow Me!” Blessed is the person who responds positively and follows Jesus.

Today I want to give you three reasons for following Jesus. I have entitled this message: “Why follow Jesus?” All three reasons come from Jesus statement we heard just before: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6)

The three reasons for following Jesus are:

1. He is The Way
2. He is The Truth
3. He is the Life.

All three of these points are closely woven together, but we will try to look at each one separately in order to gain a deeper understanding.

Firstly, Jesus is The Way. If our goal is to know The Father, and to live in Heaven in eternity, then we need to come the right way. That is only logical. If I want to drive to Melbourne, I must take the right road to get there. I cannot drive along any old road in any direction and

hope that I will reach my desired destination. I need to go along the Highway that leads to Melbourne.

There is only one road to Heaven. This road is narrow. It begins at the foot of Jesus cross. Someone once illustrated it this way: Sin has caused a great ravine to appear and you are on one side and God is on the other. This ravine is deep and there is no way across. In order for man to get to God, God had to build a bridge. This bridge is the cross. It is the only way across. If we do not come to the cross, we may get a glimpse of God on the other side, we may know a bit about Him, but we cannot get to Him,

Jesus shed His innocent blood upon the cross, so that we could come to the Father, so that we could live life to the fullest here and spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Jesus suffered our punishment, He paid the wages of our sin, because He loved each one of us so very much. The Bible tells us:

“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)

Can you imagine it? Were you listening? God so loved you. Yes you!

We heard in our foundation text that God desires for all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Jesus dies for all mankind. He paid the total human sin debt in full with His blood. When you confess your sin and accept Him in your heart as Lord and Saviour then you are on the path that leads to Heaven.

This brings me to the second point of why we should follow Jesus – because He is The Truth.

As I already mentioned there are not many truths; there is but one Truth. This Truth is Jesus, this truth is God’s Holy Word. Jesus and the Bible are inseparable. We read in John 1:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵ The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:1-5)

God’s Word; Jesus Christ is the Truth. This Truth is a light that shines in the darkness. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, this world is rapidly sliding downhill. As we get further and further from God, the darkness becomes thicker. People’s minds and hearts are darkened. Things that people knew to be wrong 50; a hundred years ago, are today accepted as normal. All in all things are not improving, they are not getting better. This is no surprise because we read in the New Testament: But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant,

revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.” (2.Timothy 3:1-5)

If someone doubts the Truth of God’s Word, then they need to read these words carefully. These five verses so accurately describe our situation today. There is a lack of Truth in society. We will not change the whole world overnight but we can ensure that we stand for the Truth where we are. We can shine God’s light in our surroundings. Our light will shine if we follow Jesus.

The truth sets us free. Lies, false doctrines keep people enslaved and in the dark. Many people are enslaved spiritually because they do not know the Truth,. They have not accepted Jesus into their hearts. Many are enslaved to religions and religious forms and practices. Many live in fear and try to appease God with their religious activities. Jesus said to a group of Jews who had begun to believe in 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)

Who doesn’t want to be free? In Jesus you can be. When you know the truth, the truth sets you free. When you accept Jesus and confess Him as Lord, He sets you free. You are free from all that holds you in bondage. Jesus grants peace, that peace which far surpasses our human understanding. He grants joy. A deep joy that wells up within your heart, that is there even when your circumstances are bad. He rolls the weight off your shoulders and gives you renewed strength. This freedom that comes from truly following Jesus is really indescribable. It has to be experienced. To experience it all you need to do is come to Him in faith. He promised that He would never turn away anyone that comes to Him.

If you come to Him with an open heart, with a true desire to know Him, He will accept you as you are. He will wash away your sins with His blood and clothe you in garments of righteousness. He loves you. Have you come to Him? Come today.

That brings me to my third and final point: Why follow Jesus? – because He is life. Without Jesus you are not really living. At best you are existing. Life begins at the cross. Life begins when we are born again as Children of God.

Paul writes: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

When we have crucified our ego, our own desires, and put on Christ, then we are living. Jesus lives within our hearts and where Christ is abiding there is the fruit of the Holy Spirit:

“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.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

This fruit is beautiful. This fruit is life.

Why follow Jesus? Because He is The Way, The Truth and The Life.

He loves you so very much. Heed His invitation and come to Him today. If you have never come, come today. If you have come before come to Him anew and afresh. He is waiting with outstretched arms.

Amen.

Pastor Colvin S. MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.