

Jesus Christ is with us – 26 /02/2017

“and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Mt.28:20

Beloved in The Lord,

A child of God lives very securely, because he or she is never alone. A Christian is never alone. From the moment, you are born again, your life changes, and you are never alone, not even for a second.

Our text today is the last statement that Jesus made before He ascended to the Father in Heaven. He had just given them the Great Commission and then He reassured them by saying: *“and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

Having said this, Jesus disappeared into the clouds. How could this be? He just promised to be with them always, and now He was gone? This was not logical. The answer lies in what Jesus taught them:

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.¹⁹ After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.” Jn.14:16-19

Jesus said that The Holy Spirit abides with us and resides within our hearts. When we confess Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, then at that moment we are sealed by The Holy Spirit as God’s children, and also from then on, He, God The Holy Spirit resides in our hearts.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. He always glorifies Jesus and points to Jesus. He is called the Helper. He comes to our aid and He is our strength and power. Jesus told His disciples that it was better that He goes, because when He has gone, then The Holy Spirit would come in His place. Through The Holy Spirit, Jesus is with us in a more complete way.

We read: ***“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; “Jn 16:7-8***

Ten days later, on the Day of Pentecost, The Holy Spirit came into the world with mighty signs and He filled the believers. The Christian Church was born on that day, as three thousand people repented of their sins and were baptised. They were filled with The Holy Spirit and the Church began to grow.

Since that day, God is present in all believers through the in dwelling of The Holy Spirit. It is also important to understand that The Holy Spirit is also present wherever God’s Word is. Martin Luther, the father of our faith, always emphasised that God The Holy Spirit works in, through and under the Word of God. Where the Word is present, so too, God The Holy Spirit. Where God’s Word is proclaimed, there The Holy Spirit is at work. Where The Bible is

preached, read, meditated upon, taught, revered, there The Holy Spirit is at work in a powerful way. The more time a person spends in God's Word, the more evidence there will be of The Holy Spirit at work in that life.

Faith is like a muscle. A muscle needs nutrition and exercise to grow and to function well. Without these two factors, a muscle becomes weak and useless. This is also true of faith. Faith that is not fed on the Word of God, and exercised in daily life, is of little value. We must work out our faith.

We return to our text. Jesus said that He is with us always, even to the end of the age. Do you realise this? Do you believe this truth? Many in our community make the mistake of not realising this truth. Many live a divided life. They separate the earthly from the spiritual. For many, life is made up of mainly worldly things with an occasional devotional time slotted in here and there. This is not a good way to view life and deprives you of many blessings.

God is calling us to live a Holy life and He is not really interested in Holy moments. For too many people their devotion ends with the final Amen of the service. They walk out of Church and step back into the world and live and conduct their affairs as if God stayed in the Church, waiting to see them again next time. What a tragic paradigm.

The truth is that Jesus does not remain in the Church, He comes with you. He is in your heart. He is with you wherever you go, whatever you do. This is spelt out so beautifully in Psalm 139. I quote a few verses:

"O LORD, You have searched me and known me.

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;

You understand my thought from afar.

³ You scrutinize my path and my lying down,

And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before there is a word on my tongue,

Behold, O LORD, You know it all.

⁵ You have enclosed me behind and before,

And laid Your hand upon me." Ps.139

No matter where you go, God has His hand upon you. He is with you when you sit down, when you stand up, when you are at home, or at work, or at play. Whether you are awake or asleep, He is still with you, watching over you. Be aware of this and so conduct your life accordingly. Also, be aware that He loves you so very much. His thoughts and plans for you, are the very best. That is why it is so important to trust Him, submit to Him and to seek His guidance every step of the way. There is nothing that He does not know or that He cannot do. He is all knowing, all powerful and ever present.

Are you lacking understanding in something? Ask Him. Are you feeling lonely? Talk to Him. If you are experiencing doubts and fears, worries, are hurting, run to Him; He is waiting for you. Jesus said:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Mt.11:28-30

Jesus is inviting us to come to Him. This should not be difficult. You do not have to physically go anywhere. You don't need a car or bus or train to get to Him. He is only a prayer away. His line is never busy and He always answers the call when He sees you ringing. He is waiting for you, more than you can begin to imagine. Remember, He loves you.

He will not be taken aback, nor surprised by anything that you say. He knows it already. David wrote: ***Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all. Ps.139:4***

Do not try to make it through life on your own, trust in Him. He loves you with an everlasting love. As the song says: *“Stand up, stand up for Jesus, stand in His strength alone; The arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own. Put on the Gospel armour, each piece put on with prayer; Where duty calls or danger, be never wanting there.”*

The Apostle Paul confessed: ***“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” Phil. 4:13***

He did not say: “I can do all things in my own strength – no in God's strength – in the strength of the one who empowers me from within.” Paul relied upon The Holy Spirit to empower him. He did so much for God's Kingdom. He did so much to glorify Jesus.

Today we have our AGM. On this day, I pray that these simple words and this deliberation, would be a source of encouragement for us all. May it strengthen us both individually and as a congregation. May we be aware that Jesus is with us, and that He empowers us to do His will and to live a life that honours Him. May we serve Him in such a way that His name is glorified.

I close today with a Psalm that we should inscribe on our hearts. May it be a blessing to us personally and to our congregation. Where Israel is mentioned we may also place our own name and the name of our congregation: The Latvian Ev.Lutheran Church in Sydney.

***I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;
From where shall my help come?***

***² My help comes from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.***

***³ He will not allow your foot to slip;
He who keeps you will not slumber.***

***⁴ Behold, He who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.***

⁵ *The LORD is your keeper;
The LORD is your shade on your right hand.*

⁶ *The sun will not smite you by day,
Nor the moon by night.*

⁷ *The LORD will protect you from all evil;
He will keep your soul.*

⁸ *The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in
From this time forth and forever. Amen.*

*Pastor Colvin MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.
All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.*