

## Unfinished painting – Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2014

***“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).***

Beloved in The Lord,

On April 12<sup>th</sup> 1945, then president of The United States of America, Franklin Delano Roosevelt died suddenly of a brain haemorrhage. At the time, he was sitting for a portrait. Famous portrait artist Madam Shoumataff was working on her painting, when the president collapsed suddenly and died. That particular painting was never finished and came to be known as “The Unfinished Portrait.”

When Madam Shoumataff returned to finish the portrait she decided to leave it as it was and to paint an entirely new one using photographs as her source. The finished portrait depicted a much younger, healthier, stronger looking president. Neither the finished, nor the unfinished portrait, revealed what the photographs revealed, and that was the tremendous toll the stress of office had taken upon Roosevelt.

Have you ever wondered how God sees you? What does God see when He looks at you? Does He look upon your imperfections, the stains and mars of sin; the stress marks of life or does He see you as a beautiful, wonderful picture, a reflection of His Son Jesus? I believe that if we are in Christ Jesus, then God sees the finished picture. He sees the perfect, sinless, saint who will forever be in His Kingdom. He sees the finished product, even though presently we are still an unfinished portrait.

God has not finished the painting yet. Last Sunday, Linda and I visited the Museum of Contemporary Art here in Sydney. As I looked at the paintings and other works of art, I was, as always, amazed at the imagination of the artists. The artist stands before a blank canvas, but in his or her mind the picture is clear. They already see in their minds eye, what the end product will hopefully be.

I believe that this is the case with God, our Heavenly Father. Before we were born, before He created us, He knew what we would be, and who we would be. We are His workmanship. Paul puts it like this: ***“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).***

I would like you to notice two things here: Firstly we are His (God’s ) workmanship and secondly God had our works prepared beforehand. David put it this way:

***“For You formed my inward parts;  
You wove me in my mother’s womb.***

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***14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
Wonderful are Your works,  
And my soul knows it very well.***

***15 My frame was not hidden from You,  
When I was made in secret,  
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;***

***16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;  
And in Your book were all written  
The days that were ordained for me,  
When as yet there was not one of them.***

***17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!***

***18 If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.  
When I awake, I am still with You” (Psalm 139:13-18).***

God formed us, made us, shaped us according to His plan, to fulfil His purposes, for His glory. He hasn't finished with us yet, and we could say that our portrait will not be finished until we leave this earthly body and stand before Him in Glory.

We read in Romans 8:28:

***“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”***

Whenever I read “We know...” it makes we wonder if we really do know. How many of us really know that what Paul writes here is the absolute unchanging truth? Do you believe and know that if you love God, He causes all things to work together for good. All things means exactly that – all things! Not only the good and pleasant things, but also the seemingly bad and painful things. Everything that God allows in our life, is ultimately for our good and His glory. Everything that God allows is ultimately part of the painting process. Remember the painting is not finished yet.

God is a Master Artist, and He knows exactly what He is doing. He knows exactly what is required to achieve the result He has intended. He never makes a mistake, His brush never slips, He never overlooks anything. He does all things perfectly.

Always remember that God is love and everything He does is done in love. Remember the truth we considered a little while ago that we are precious to God. We were bought with a tremendous price. The price of redemption was the Blood of Jesus Christ. His Holy, pure and innocent blood. There is nothing of more value in the universe than the Blood of Jesus.

My dear friends, God so loves each one of us. He sees us as saints, cleansed and perfected, holy and blameless. Understand this.

What does this mean for us? How should we live in the light of this truth? With thanksgiving!

Paul writes: ***“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1.Thes.5:18).***

In everything... Yes also in those times when it seems that God’s Hand is lying heavily upon you. He knows what He is doing, even though you may not. He has His own plan and purpose, that He is working out in your life. Remember He sees the finished painting, and He knows what still needs to be done, in order for it to be perfect, so that you would reflect His love.

When we learn to give thanks in everything, we experience a tremendous freedom. It brings us close to God. It brings a powerful awareness of His presence. It causes our faith to grow stronger. It helps us to get through the most difficult and trying circumstances in life, because you know that God is behind it all and is in control.

This is why Paul could write: ***“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”***

It is always blessed to give God what He desires. His will is that we give Him thanks. May we always abound in thanksgiving. In everything let us give thanks to God.

Last Sunday I encouraged you to focus your faith upon Jesus. We saw that we should focus upon God in all times and in all places, in all things. I remind you of this today because it is vital to having peace in your heart. One way that we concentrate our focus upon God, is in giving thanks. We can never thank God enough, we can never exhaust our supply of things to be thankful for. David writes:

***“Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.  
<sup>2</sup> Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
And forget none of His benefits;  
<sup>3</sup> Who pardons all your iniquities,  
Who heals all your diseases;  
<sup>4</sup> Who redeems your life from the pit,  
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;  
<sup>5</sup> Who satisfies your years with good things” (Psalm 103:1-5a).***

Bless the Lord, O my soul. As I said last Sunday sometimes we need to force ourselves to do so. We don’t always feel thankful. Our feelings may be prompting us to whinge and complain, and to have a pity party. Bless The Lord, O my soul. Force yourself to do it.

Say with David: ***“I will sing of lovingkindness and justice,  
To You, O Lord, I will sing praises.***

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**<sup>2</sup> I will give heed to the blameless way.**

**When will You come to me?**

**I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart” (Psalm 101:1-2).**

To You, O Lord, I will sing praises.

In the previous Psalm we read:

**“A Psalm for Thanksgiving.**

**Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth.**

**<sup>2</sup> Serve the Lord with gladness;**

**Come before Him with joyful singing.**

**<sup>3</sup> Know that the Lord Himself is God;**

**It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;**

**We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.**

**<sup>4</sup> Enter His gates with thanksgiving**

**And His courts with praise.**

**Give thanks to Him, bless His name.**

**<sup>5</sup> For the Lord is good;**

**His lovingkindness is everlasting**

**And His faithfulness to all generations” (Psalm 100).**

The Psalmist reminds us to praise and to worship and thank God, because He is good. He is good. He loves us. He has mercy on us. He shapes and moulds us in His Hands. Through Christ He has removed us from the kingdom of darkness and brought us into His wonderful light. He has set us free from sin and death through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Oh, Yes, He is good. May we be fully convinced of this truth and even though our portrait is yet unfinished, it will not be like that first portrait of Roosevelt, that was never finished and remains incomplete. What God has started, He will finish in His time and in His way.

We began with these words and so we close with them:

**“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus”.**

**Let us turn this into our own personal confession by proclaiming:**

I thank You my God, and I am confident of this very thing, that the good work you began in me, You will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Amen

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.

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