

## Unshakeable Kingdom - Sunday June 17<sup>th</sup> 2012

***Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; "Hebrews 12:28***

Beloved in the Lord,

Back in 1918 on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, when Latvia declared her Independence there was much celebration and hope for the new nation. Unfortunately the celebrations did not last long, because the enemy was already at work. Today in our service we commemorate those who were brutally deported at the hands of a godless regime. Many died and many did not return.

***Jesus said: "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)***

Latvians and indeed all Baltic people would have no difficulty in agreeing with these words. We have seen and experienced much heartache, tribulation and loss. Jesus also said: ***"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."*** (John 10:10). The thief has worked relentlessly in our midst and we have lost many fine people. It is not my intention today to dwell on painful memories, because in so doing we will not really achieve anything good. I believe that we will be blessed and will receive much more if we lift our eyes above all our problems and look to Jesus Christ.

In both of the above quoted texts we see that Jesus points out the negative, but then goes on to stress the positive. He says that in the world we do have tribulation, but.... You see he does not place a full stop there, but a comma. What follows is our source of hope and peace and joy – but take courage, for I have overcome the world.. You see even though we have had trials and tribulations, and more than likely will do in the future, we do not have to lose hope, because we can turn our eyes upon Jesus who has conquered.

Yes, it is true, the thief comes and steals, kills, and destroys, but Jesus said that He (Jesus) has come that we may have life and have it abundantly. He is greater and bigger and stronger than the devil. The thief is the devil and he went into battle with Jesus and lost. The battle took place at Calvary where it seemed on Friday that the devil had won. But by Sunday morning it was clear who the victor was. Jesus has won for ever. In the last book of the Bible we read Jesus words: ***"I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."*** (Rev.1:17-18)

Life is in the hands of Jesus. Power is in the hands of Jesus. He has all power. He said to His disciples on Ascension day: ***"All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me."*** (Matt.28:18). The word all means all! Jesus is more powerful than anything the devil can

throw at us. That is why He invites us to place our trust in Him totally and completely. It is only when we do fully trust Him that we experience true freedom. Only then do we find true meaning in our lives. When we fully trust Jesus and have entrusted all to Him in faith then we can live in joy and peace. Only through Jesus are we able to rid ourselves of hatred and forgive those who have sinned against us. Only in Jesus can we find healing for our souls. It is only when we fully trust in Him, that we realise that this world is not our real home, we seek a world yet to come. Only in Jesus are we blessed.

We live in a sick, hurting, and dying world. This world is subject to the devil and has been since Adam rebelled against God in the garden of Eden. The only cure for this sick world is The Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other solution.

Solomon wrote these very powerful words in Psalm 127:

***“Unless the Lord builds the house,  
They labor in vain who build it;  
Unless the Lord guards the city,  
The watchman keeps awake in vain.  
<sup>2</sup> It is vain for you to rise up early,  
To retire late,  
To eat the bread of painful labors;  
For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.***

Where God, who has revealed Himself to us through His Son Jesus, is not in first place, there will be nothing good. We can run, busy ourselves, write, ponder, muse, debate as much as we like, but without God as Supreme, nothing will come of it.

June 14 is a very powerful reminder of what a godless regime can and will do. Communism denied God, and it was able to suppress, murder, steal and rape without any regard whatsoever for human life or dignity. Neither man nor God was important. Where God is not supreme there cannot be anything good. The heart of man is evil, deceitful, prideful.

Anyone that does not subject themselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in faith is more or less a slave of Satan.

We return now to our foundation text:

***Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;***

There are a number of important lessons here. The first is that we must receive this Kingdom which is unshakeable. We receive this Kingdom when we humble ourselves and submit our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. When we confess our sin and receive Jesus

into our hearts as Lord and Saviour we receive our citizenship in this unshakeable Kingdom. We become citizens of heaven when we are born again. Everything changes in our lives. Paul wrote:

***“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. <sup>18</sup> Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup> namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.***

***<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2. Corinthians 5:17-21***

When we are reconciled with God through Jesus blood, then the old things have passed away and the new have come. Hallelujah. Our eyes are set straight ahead and not backwards. We set our eyes firmly upon Jesus.

It is of utmost importance that we ask ourselves the question: “Am I reconciled to God in Jesus?”

Those of you over the age of 71 who were in Latvia on June 14<sup>th</sup> need to consider the question: “Why were you spared?” “Why did God save you?” The mere fact that we are alive today must raise the question why? Have you been reconciled to God? If you have, live in thanksgiving and praise everyday of your life. May your life reflect His love and bring glory to His name. If you have not yet been reconciled why not? What are you waiting for? Come to Him today. Open up your heart to the one who said: ***“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).***

So we must receive the Kingdom in faith.

Secondly we are to be thankful. ***“let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;”***

When we show gratitude to God, we honour Him. When we honour Him with our gratitude we serve Him in an acceptable manner. When our service and reverence of God, stems from a grateful heart, when we thank Him for His Amazing Grace, then we can be sure that we will be blessed of Him. The Word of God clearly teaches: ***“Yet You are holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.” Psalm 22:3***

Please see what this says: God is enthroned upon the praises of His people. If we want God to Bless and rule over us, our families, our nation, our land, then we must humble ourselves

and bring Him praise and glory. That is why Paul wrote: ***“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4)***

The important words here are **IN THE LORD**. In the world there is little to be joyful about, but in the Lord there is much. Remember we saw what Jesus said: ***“In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” (Jn.16:33)***

If our focus is on the world, then we will not have deep abiding joy. If however our focus is on The Lord Jesus Christ, then we will have joy. It is that simple.

Today on this solemn commemoration may we focus on Jesus. Let us surrender all to Him. Let us place all we have upon His altar. We offer ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice, and we choose to serve Him in love and gratitude. In doing this we will bring down blessing upon blessing on ourselves, our family and nation.

In the words of the great Hymn written by Fanny Crosby:

Hold Thou my hand; so weak I am, and helpless,  
I dare not take one step without Thy aid;  
Hold Thou my hand; for then, O loving Savior,  
No dread of ill shall make my soul afraid.

Hold Thou my hand, and closer, closer draw me  
To Thy dear self—my hope, my joy, my all;  
Hold Thou my hand, lest haply I should wander,  
And, missing Thee, my trembling feet should fall.

Hold Thou my hand; the way is dark before me  
Without the sunlight of Thy face divine;  
But when by faith I catch its radiant glory,  
What heights of joy, what rapturous songs are mine!

Hold Thou my hand, that when I reach the margin  
Of that lone river Thou didst cross for me,  
A heavenly light may flash along its waters,  
And every wave like crystal bright shall be.

***Amen.***

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.