

Fellowship – Sunday July 22nd 2012.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

Revelation 3:20

Beloved in the Lord,

Have you ever asked yourself the question: “Why am I here? Why was I created by God? Why did God create man?”

In understanding the answer to these questions, we understand the Gospel much better.

The death and resurrection of Jesus makes a whole lot more sense. Not only that, we also find the answers to a lot of the questions we may have about the meaning and purpose of life.

God created man for fellowship. It is as simple as that! The Bible clearly teaches us that God is love. Love is very hard to contain. If your heart is full of love it by nature wants to express itself. In order to express His love, to share His love, God created man in His own Image and Likeness. He placed man in a beautiful paradise garden called Eden.

God’s purpose and intention was to live in fellowship with man. This was the case in the very beginning. God and man enjoyed sweet fellowship. Adam and Eve saw God face to face. We read in Genesis that in the cool of the evening, God would walk in the Garden and spend time in fellowship with Adam. They would have a chat. We don’t know what they talked about, but I can well imagine that one of the things they discussed was the names given to the animals. It was Adams task to name the wildlife. Adam would say that big grey thing I have named Elephant, that is a cat, that is a horse, that one is a dog and so forth.

There was truly sweet fellowship, friendship. Adam was also in charge of the land and the cultivation and well being thereof.

Suddenly one day everything changed. God came into the garden, and instead of Adam coming to greet Him, Adam had hid himself from the presence of the Lord. God calls out:

“ Where are you?” ¹⁰ He said, “ I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.” (Genesis 3:9b-10)

Why was Adam suddenly aware that he was naked? What had changed? He and Eve, had transgressed God’s commandment and had eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They had rebelled against God. The fellowship/friendship had been broken. They were no longer Holy and pure, but now smeared with sin. Adam could no longer stand in the presence of a perfectly Holy God. The fellowship is ruined. God has to throw them out of the garden , they become mortal.

This however did not change the desire that God had for man, nor did it change His mind. He was and is still a God of love and still desired and desires to have fellowship with man.

The problem is that sin cannot stand in the presence of His holiness. The only solution is blood. God kills an innocent animal, sheds its blood to cover their sin, and uses the skin to make clothes to cover their nakedness.

This is much more than just a covering of their physical nakedness. This was the first sign of Jesus coming. God was showing that eventually He would shed the innocent blood of the Lamb of God, His precious Son, to atone for the sin of mankind. Salvation is in the blood.

In God's system there are two immutable laws: The wages of sin is death, and without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sin.

All through the Old Testament we see the sacrificial system at work, whereby an innocent animal's blood is shed to pay for the sin of guilty man. The animal bears the punishment. It is a substitutory death or sacrifice. This again pointed to Calvary, where the Son of God, the innocent Holy and unblemished Lamb shed His Holy blood once for all time and all people.

We read in Hebrews (9:11-14)

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;¹² and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

My friends, it is vital that you understand the importance of these words. Our Salvation, the restoration of our relationship with God is possible only by the Blood of Jesus. Nothing else. Jesus shed His blood once for all time as payment for our sin debt in full. He took our sin, our punishment and died in our place, He died a substitutory death, He shed His blood in order that we may be reconciled to God.

It is sin that separates us from God, and it is the Blood of Jesus that allows us to be reconciled to Him. When we confess our sin, when we turn from it (repent) and acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, then Jesus blood washes away all our sin and we are reconciled to Holy God.

Not our service, not our good works, not our giving, not our membership of a Church, not religious activity, but faith in Jesus Christ. Belief that His blood has paid the price. Martin Luther always stressed – Sola Christus – Christ Alone.

When we believe on Jesus, when we place our trust in Him, when we receive His sacrifice on our behalf for our salvation. then we are saved from sin, death and hell.

We read in John 1:12

“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,”

When we believe in Jesus, then we are children of God. We then have fellowship with the Father.

That is what God is calling us, each one of us into. He wants us to fellowship with Him here in this life and then forever in eternity.

In our foundation text we hear Jesus saying:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

Please understand that these words were originally written to the Angel of the Church at Laodicea. You see you can be a Church goer, a member, and not have fellowship with Jesus. Millions of people attend Churches across the world, but they are not saved, they do not know Jesus, they have never opened the door of their hearts to Him.

That is sad and tragic. They are missing out on the greatest life possible. There is nothing better than to live in sweet fellowship with God the Father, through Jesus in the power of The Holy Spirit.

There is nothing better than sitting down at the table with Jesus and having fellowship. To be together with Him.

He is not interested in external religion and religious activities. He wants your heart. He wants you to respond to His love with love.

He died for you. He shed His blood for you, that you may enjoy life with Him. Speaking to the religious leaders of His time Jesus said to them: ***“You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: ‘ This people honours Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.” (Matthew 15:7-8)***

Jesus did not say these harsh words with any sense of joy, but with great sadness. God wants our hearts, not just religious talk. He wants and desires fellowship, not empty meaningless religious activity.

As He stood outside Jerusalem Jesus wept and said:

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.” (Matthew 23:37)

Can you feel His pain, His sorrow? What love is expressed, what sadness in His tears. I wanted to, but you were unwilling. I loved you, but the world had more attraction for you than I did. Everything else was more important to you. I had so much to give, but you did not receive.

God has so much He desires to give to you. He desires for you to love Him as He loves you. The first step is to open the door of your heart. Then the next step is to consciously spend time with Him every day, day by day. The more time you spend in fellowship with Him. the more you will want to.

You will find that in His presence, as you rest your head on His bosom, that there is peace, joy, love, fullness, security, and so much more. All your needs are met.

Make a commitment to work on your relationship every day. Read His Word, pray, worship and adore Him.

This will be a blessing to you, and all around you.

Amen.

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

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.