

Sunday November 20th 2011 – God’s Path

Psalm 119:33

**Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall observe it to the end.**

Beloved in the Lord!

I have begun to cycle again this year. We have a bikeway very close to home, that winds its way along the Cooks River. We can ride from our place out to the airport and beyond along cycle ways.

A few weeks ago, a section of the cycle way was closed so that the council workers could do some maintenance on the trees. There were signs up warning of the closure, along with a map of alternative routes. One afternoon I headed off, having completely forgotten about the closure. When I reached the part that was cordoned off, I had a quick glance at the map showing the alternative route and then headed off across the bridge. I was confident that I would find my way. As I entered unknown territory, my confidence waned and I became increasingly lost. After a while I abandoned my course, chiding myself for not studying the map, and for being so self confident.

In life we can easily get lost. We face alternatives and choices along the way. There are many crossroads and forks in the road. Often it is hard to know whether to go left or right.

That is where Psalm 119 is such a powerful prayer. ***“Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, And I shall observe it to the end.”*** If we pray this from the heart, then God is always more than happy to answer this prayer. He desires to teach us His way, to lead us and guide us every step of the way. He desires to show us His plan, His will, His path or course for our lives.

There is a requirement on our part, we must abandon our own will and desires, our own self sufficiency and we must be diligent in learning God’s ways.

God has given us a map, and if we study it, and follow it, then we will walk His path through life, bringing Glory to His Holy name. On the other hand, if we do as I did on that ride that day, ignore the map, we will get lost.

To stray off God’s path is a much more serious matter than roaming around the streets trying to find the way home. To stray off God’s path can lead to eternal separation from Him.

Today is the final Sunday in this current Church year. On this day we remember all who have died in the Church year. We remember our loved ones who have left this world. Life does

not end in the cemetery. Life does not end when we draw our final breath. God has created us to live forever.

There are many thoughts floating about as to what happens after we die. There are many and varied teachings. This year we have had a number of misleading articles published in the Latvian papers and elsewhere on this subject.

Let me state it categorically: There is only one Truth, not many. God gives us the Truth in His Word. If we stick with what God's Word teaches, then our Theology will be correct, and our understanding will also be correct.

We should never seek the answers to these questions in mans ideas, thoughts and philosophies. We should not seek the answers in the dreams, visions and musings of mere men. The truth is to be sought in God's Word, where every verse is inspired by God Himself through the Holy Spirit. God's Word alone is Truth.

In a few verses previous to our text we read: ***"Remove the false way from me, And graciously grant me Your law."*** (Vs29)

Over and over we are warned in God's Word to beware of false prophets and false teachers. In order that we be not deceived we must draw from the Living Water – God's Word, The Bible.

I believe that it is important for me to underline or emphasise a few truths today.

The first is that the Word of God teaches us that the wages of sin is death. God created man to live forever in this world, but as a result of sin, man became subject to corruption and death. It is appointed for a man to die once and then the judgement. We read in Hebrews 9:27-28: ***"And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,²⁸ so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. "***

It is appointed for men to die once! You have not lived before, and come back now in a new body. Reincarnation is a false teaching invented by Satan himself in order to deceive people.

Each one of us is a unique, one off individual created by Almighty God. We live once on this earth, we die, that is our body dies, our soul and spirit live on to go and face God. If we die in Jesus we are received into glory, if we die an infidel, an unbeliever, without Christ, we go to Hell forever in darkness.

Where we go is decided here in this life. After death it is too late.

The good news is stated by Jesus:

"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.¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to

judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:16-18

God in His great mercy and love has given us a Saviour – His Son Jesus, who suffered the death penalty on our behalf, so that believing on Him we may have eternal life in Heaven.

Jesus says clearly and unmistakably: ***“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” John 3:36***

When we believe in Jesus we have eternal life. To believe in Jesus means to put our trust in Him. To understand that His blood and His blood alone cleanses us from sin, wipes our debt, and only through Him can we become children of God.

Let us then be clear. We live once. Here in this life our eternal destiny is forever decided and sealed.

The next thing that many have been deceived about and are not clear about is the timing of the departure of our soul and spirit from this world. The moment we die our soul and spirit leave this world. They do not stay till the funeral or for 40 days as some falsely teach. The soul and spirit depart immediately. When the first Christian martyr Stephen was being stoned to death, the last thing he saw with his physical eyes was that Heaven was open, Jesus was standing by the Father’s throne ready to receive his soul and spirit..

Paul writes in his second letter to the Corinthians:

¹ For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, ³ inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. ⁴ For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

⁶ Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight— ⁸ we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. ⁹ Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Cor.5:1-10)

When we leave this body as Christians, we are immediately home with the Lord. Absent from the body, present with the Lord. There are many other things we could discuss, but

alas time does not allow. Let me stress again the importance of staying on God's path and not straying.

Let us be clear as to what the Bible teaches.

Let us understand that God loves each one of us so much. He does not desire for us to be lost, downcast or afraid.

In closing this Church year, let us humble ourselves before Him and rededicate our lives to Him.

Let us pray from the heart:

**Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall observe it to the end.**

Amen

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

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.