

Two wings - 28/02/2016

¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
(Matthew 28:18-20)

Beloved in The Lord,

An aeroplane has two wings, sometimes more, but at least two. Two wings are needed to maintain balance when flying. If one wing were to break off the aeroplane is no longer able to fly properly.

A cross is comprised of two beams – the vertical beam and the horizontal beam. If either one is missing it is no longer a cross.

Christianity, and the Church has two wings, and in order for a church to function correctly both of these must be in place. The two wings are summed up in the Great Commandment and also in the Great Commission. When both of these are observed then the church is working effectively and fulfilling her role, which is to glorify God.

In our readings today we heard the Great Commandment – that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and that we are to love our neighbour as ourselves. Our foundation text is the Great Commission, that is that we are to take the Gospel message to all people.

Today we have our AGM, and therefore it is appropriate that we meditate upon the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. We need to be clear, that the Church, the congregation exists to glorify God, to fulfil His purposes. The church is much more than just another organisation. The church was founded by Christ Himself and it exists for Him, to do His will and to bring Him glory.

God does not leave us in the dark concerning our role. We are clearly told in the Great Commandment and in the Great Commission. We also need to be clear that the church is not this beautiful sanctuary, this building, the church is the people, the members. Every Christian belongs to the universal or invisible Church, that is the body of Christ. But the invisible Church has local chapters, and in our case that is our Sydney Latvian Congregation.

Maintenance of the two wings of the church, is our joint task. Every Christian stands under both The Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Everyone of us has a unique part to play, we each have our place and our own role. Remember, we saw at the beginning of the year, that each one of us is a unique piece of the jigsaw puzzle.

Let us now take a closer look at the two wings. Firstly the Great Commandment:

³⁷ And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹ The

***second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*⁴⁰ *On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.*" (Mt.22:37-40)**

To my mind the best way to illustrate the Great Commandment is a cross, which is the main symbol of the Christian faith. The vertical part of the cross represents the first part of the commandment – to love God. God so loved us and we are to love Him in return. God demonstrated His love for us on the cross. He sacrificed His Son Jesus for us on a cross. ***"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 great is God's love for us, so precious we are in His sight, that Jesus shed His own innocent blood to redeem us from sin and eternal death. The cross is a wonderful and indescribable manifestation of God's amazing Grace and love. God so loved us. When we understand this, our natural reaction should be to love Him in return. Many people do not really love God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind, simply because they do not take their sin, and sin in general, seriously. They do not understand that they have been saved from hell by Jesus love.

Jesus said it in a parable: ***"A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty."***⁴² ***When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?"***⁴³ ***Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more."*** ***And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."*** (Lk.7:41-43)

Jesus told this parable on an occasion when He was visiting the home of Simon a Pharisee. A woman came in, and began to wash Jesus feet with her tears, and wipe them with her hair. She kissed Jesus feet and anointed them with expensive perfume. She had been a prostitute, who had repented and received forgiveness from Jesus. She was showing her love and gratitude. Jesus said to Simon, who had expressed distaste and criticism at her: ***"For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."*** Lk.7:47

You see, this woman knew she was a sinner, she understood what forgiveness meant, and so great was her gratitude and love. How is it with us? Do we understand the weight and seriousness of our sin? Do we comprehend how amazing God's grace and love truly is? Jesus forgives us all our sin. That means our love should be beyond measure. That is the vertical beam of the cross.

Now the horizontal. We are to love our neighbour as ourselves. Having received God's grace and mercy, being recipients of His tremendous love, we should show that love to others. Again there is a great parable from the lips of Jesus that tells the story:

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves."²⁴ ***When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him."***²⁵ ***But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made."***²⁶ ***So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.'***²⁷ ***And the lord of***

*that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.²⁸ But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.'²⁹ So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.'³⁰ But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.³¹ So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened.³² Then summoning him, his lord *said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.³³ Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?'³⁴ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.³⁵ My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart." (Mt.18:23-35)*

I don't think that this parable needs much explanation. We pray in the Lord's prayer: ***"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."*** Jesus has loved us with total unreserved love, and we are to love others in the same way. So that is the Great Commandment.

Very briefly, let us look at the other wing, - The Great Commission.

The spreading of the Gospel is closely related to the Great Commandment. Having received God's grace, having experienced Christ's love, we are to tell others about it. Just think about it. If you were cured from a life threatening disease, and you had the medicine to cure others, would you keep it to yourself?

The Gospel message of God's love demonstrated on the Cross of Calvary, the good news of Christ's resurrection on Easter morning is life giving medicine that is good for all people. Jesus died for all people. He invites all to Himself. He commands us to take this message to all people. He said: ***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...."*** (Mt.28:19)

Elsewhere He said that we are to be salt and light. As I said earlier, I reiterate: It is our common duty, not just the congregational office bearers. We need to pray and ask God to show us, what our role is. How we can be effective for Him.

The main way we spread the Gospel is by obeying the Great Commandment to love. When others see and experience our love, that will cause them to seek the reason behind our love, and that will lead them to Christ our Lord.

Let us make sure that both wings are in good order and then let us soar to great heights for God, bringing glory to His name alone. Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.***