

Rev Tim Perkins
Sept 23rd 2020

“For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.”
(Colossians 1: 9 – 12)

Dear Friends,

Over recent weeks, I have been reflecting on whether it is possible to live a life without fear or lack. I believe it is possible, even if it is not our regular experience! We have used Psalm 23 for the basis of these reflections and today I want to turn to the final verse: *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever,”* and to ask *“How does this come to be?”* and *“what is our part in dwelling with the Lord and living our days in such a way that goodness and mercy follow us in our wake?”*

Here, we must shift from simply *knowing*, to *doing*, from an *idea*, to a *reality*. If we are going to experience a life without lack then we must plan to live it one day at a time. It won’t happen by chance or all by itself. The spiritual life is a life of training, of gradually getting spiritually fitter each day. And just like an athlete, that takes planning, preparation, coaching, practise, and good nutrition, amongst many other things.

Like many other passages of Scripture, Psalm 23 has at its heart the experience of God being present with us. The life without lack flows out of a relationship with God. As Dallas Willard writes, *“Our challenge is to stay with Him in the increasing belief that God truly desires to be with us.”*¹

God has promised to never leave or forsake us. Whatever we have or do not have makes no difference because we are with the One who will provide everything we need, and this leads us to the place of contentment. *“The only caveat is that God’s promise is made to those who trust him; who desire to be with him and to be about his business.”*²

In the great commission, Jesus calls all who would follow him into a journey, to walk through life with Jesus. It is truly a pilgrimage to be a follower of Jesus. But before we take the first step we must be prepared, we must be sure of what we are committing to, we must ask ourselves, *“Do I really want to do this?”* We need to ask and answer this question for the simple reason that *“if God is going to be with us, we should expect that our lives will be extremely different from ordinary human life. That is, our ordinary lives, our day-to-day-at-home-at-work-at-play-maybe-even-at-church lives will be extra-ordinary. We should expect nothing less. Of course, the reality is that most of religion is organised around keeping God at a distance, allowing us to ‘go see him’ when we want.”*³ We often want God to be involved, but on our terms, and God is so gracious that he often allows that. He gives us some wriggle room, the freedom

¹ Willard D, *Life without lack*, Nelson Books, 2018, P. 187.

² Op cit. P. 187

³ Op cit. P. 188

to wander from his presence. We all know that there are aspects of our lives that we would rather God not know about or be involved in. But to keep God at arm's length is to forfeit the peace that being present to God brings. It is to turn our back on the provision that God has to enable our contentment. It is to say that we do not really trust God. So we must choose. Do we really want to live under the care of our Shepherd or not? If we do, then the opportunity to spend an ordinary day with him, one day at a time, really should be a no-brainer!

If we are ready to commit to living just one day with Jesus then there are two facts we need to get to grips with: *"It is okay to be who you are wherever you are, and, what is true about you as a person is also true about your work."*⁴

We can and need to be honest with God about who we are and what we struggle with because the fact is that God accepts us as we are. We don't have to try to be someone we're not, in fact, if we try to we will not find God's blessing there because God only blesses people where they actually are! We can *become* someone we are not, but we must begin with who we are now.

*"The main thing that will ruin any possibility of staying with Jesus throughout one full day is the feeling that it is not okay to be who you are or to do the work you are doing."*⁵ We each must do our work with the words of Jesus in John 20 echoing in our ears, *"As the Father has sent me, I also send you."* We are sent by Christ to be Christ to the world in the concrete circumstances of our everyday lives. When you come to understand this you come to realise that it is good to be you, who you are, where you are and even better that each day you will grow more into who Jesus longs for you to be!

If you decide to be with Jesus for one day at a time, you will gradually come to experience six new characteristics to your life:

- **Strength to please** – God will give you the strength to do the things that please Him. You will be in the places where He would be, interacting with people as He would, responding to situations as He would. You will find yourself being kind, helpful, present, pleasant, patient, and thankful, in an increasing measure.
- **Joy and confidence** – When you are with Jesus, the resources available to you are in such overflowing abundance that you can *"Rejoice in the Lord always!"* And joy brings confidence. Joy is a pervasive sense of well-being that claims your entire body, and soul. Joy and confidence come from knowing who we are and what we are doing is good in God's eyes.
- **Loving your neighbour** – to be with Jesus is also to be fully present with the people we encounter each day. If you go through a full day with Jesus, you will soon discover a fresh awareness of those around you.
- **Carrying the load** – In a life lived with Jesus you come to realise that it is not up to you to make everything happen or to keep all the plates spinning. Yoked to Jesus you can allow him to carry most of the load as you go about your daily life together. Your mind will be clearer; you will work with strength and peace in your heart.
- **Spirit-filled** – when you allow Jesus to be in charge you find that you cannot explain some of what happens in terms of your own natural ability. The more you can turn each piece of work, each conversation over to God the more you will see God accomplish in and through you. Ask God regularly, and as you do, you will see God multiply your efforts just like Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish – not for your benefit but for His glory.

⁴ Op cit. P. 190-191.

⁵ Op. cit. P. 191

- **Speaking and hearing** – communication is the key. A day shared with Jesus is a day of constant conversation. You will learn to listen to His voice, and you will have the spiritual resources to act upon what you hear.

I wonder, does that description excite you or frighten you? Next week, I will get practical as to how to plan for and live out one day with Jesus. In the meantime, I pray that you will experience an increasing awareness of God's presence in your life, day-by-day, moment-by-moment.

Every Blessing,
Rev Tim

Notices

Farewell Gift and Service for Rev Lesley Taylor

You will recall that we were not able to hold a farewell service for Lesley in July. We had hoped that things might be easier in the autumn, but it is still not looking likely. However, we are hoping to host a farewell service virtually or to record one so that people can view it. I am expecting that will take place sometime in early October and further details will follow.

In the meantime, it is our custom when a Minister moves Circuit to express our thanks and appreciation to them for the ministry they have shared in with us. The Circuit is organising a collection for a gift for Lesley. If you would like to contribute to that you can do so by making a bank transfer to the Circuit Bank Account. The details you will need are:

Account Name: Wharfedale & Aireborough Methodist Circuit

Account Number: 00030002

Sort Code: 40-52-40

Please use the reference: LT Gift, so that we know it is given for this purpose. Alternatively, you could write a cheque made payable to Wharfedale and Aireborough Methodist Circuit, with the above reference written on the back, and send it to me at 20 Far Mead Croft, Burley in Wharfedale. LS29 7RR. It would be helpful if any such gifts could be received by the beginning of October.