

MATTHEW 16:21-27

Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. 'Heaven preserve you, Lord;' he said 'this must not happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's.'

Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let them renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save their life will lose it; but anyone who loses their life for my sake will find it. What, then, will a person gain if they win the whole world and ruin his life? Or what has a person to offer in exchange for their life?

'For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to their behaviour.'

COMMENTARY: The physical death of Jesus is one thing. It led to the resurrection. However, what is more important is the inner-self of Jesus. Without this, his death would have meant nothing. He knew he had to offer his death to reveal the total forgiveness of God and therefore God's call to grow in our humanity. God does not want us to believe only in his forgiveness but also in our call to become one with him. We have within us an innate thirst for intimacy with God.

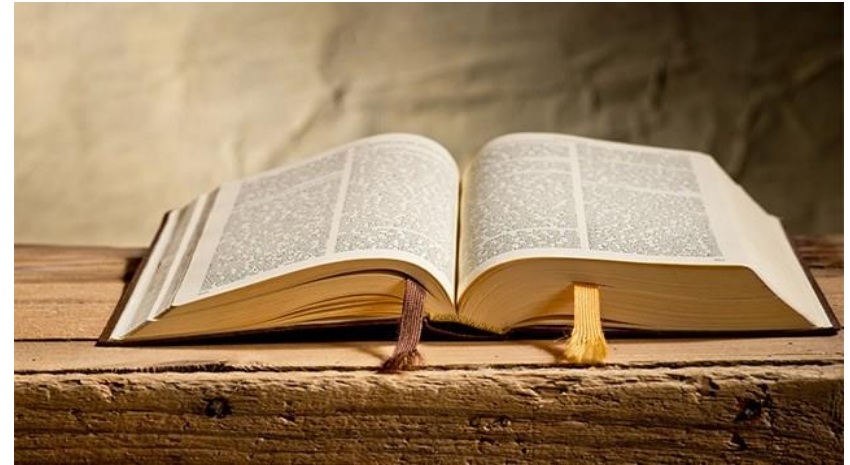
St Paul speaks of a 'new mind'. Jesus speaks of 'taking up your cross' and 'losing your life to find it'. All of this reveals a healthy psychology. Life is found in self-less-ness. Destruction is found in self-centred-ness. Belief in the resurrection of Jesus gives us the motive to choose and provides a pathway to satisfy our deepest craving.

Today I can ask myself if I have discovered the wisdom of the gospels. How have they influenced my life?

Liturgy of The Word

22ND Sunday in Ordinary Time

3RD September, 2023



My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water.

So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory.
For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise.

For you have been my help;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast.

JEREMIAH 20:7-9

You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced;
you have overpowered me: you were the stronger.
I am a daily laughing-stock,
everybody's butt.
Each time I speak the word, I have to howl
and proclaim: 'Violence and ruin!'
The word of the Lord has meant for me
insult, derision, all day long.
I used to say, 'I will not think about him,
I will not speak in his name any more.'
Then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart,
imprisoned in my bones.
The effort to restrain it wearied me,
I could not bear it.

COMMENTARY: Nobody enjoys being insulted. For Jeremiah this seems to have been his particular cross. He feels the pain of the insults that would come to him when preaching. He reaches rock bottom and wants to walk away, but the word of God is 'imprisoned in his bones'.

It is difficult to live without a community of faith. It is even more difficult to speak to those whose hearts have grown cold. Notice though the final sentence in the text. So strongly did Jeremiah believe, that he could no longer suppress the message. It was easier to put up with the suffering than to say nothing!
Discuss how this might apply to our NZ Church today.

ROMANS 12:1-2

Think of God's mercy, my brothers, and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God. Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.

COMMENTARY: While in the past the Church may have been somewhat puritanical in teachings on sexuality in particular, her purpose and desire was only that we might respect our bodies, for failure to do so will certainly kill the soul. This is because bodily pleasure can easily become an obsession. We then seek intimacy to satisfy the inner-self but in the wrong manner.

Addictions abound in society today: these relate to alcohol, drugs, sex, money, shopping, gambling, hoarding and they display themselves not only in what can be seen, but in pure self-centredness.

When we become addicted we become 'lost'. We need to find a greater love, one that enables us to see what is futile and cannot give life. St Paul speaks of a 'new mind'. I must therefore ask myself what this new mind means?' How does it help?