

Sunday, February 12, 2023 Epiphany 6

*Walking in Christ's Light*

***Deuteronomy 30:15-20 and Matthew 5:21-37***

Is life good? Good life fitness centres goal is to help all Canadians live a fit and healthy good life. LG Canada the manufacturer of many appliances, electronics and computers simply states that 'life's good'. The word 'good' has a very different meaning for very many people; however, there are some aspects of 'the good life' that most people can probably agree on such as: material comfort; wellbeing; engagement in meaningful activities/work; loving relationships (with partners, family, and friends) and belonging to a community. So is your life 'good'?

Our reading from Deuteronomy 30 is an invitation or commandment to choose the fullness of life that is, to choose to have a good life. This Old Testament reading refers to God's instructions to the people after He has lead the people of Israel through the desert. They will soon be preparing themselves to enter and live in the land of promise. But God knows what they have experienced in the desert years and how generations followed the cloud and pillar of fire to get to the Promised Land. And so God is now setting conditions to having a good life. God set before the people life and prosperity or death and adversity. This is still very much the choice that we have today. We can choose a good life or a life that is filled with adversity and serving other gods (small g).

The conditions that God laid out are obey commandments of God which include walking in His ways, observing his commandments, decrees and ordinances. IF these are completed- then you shall live and become numerous and you will be blessed. But they turn away and do not hear and then led astray to follow other gods (small g) then they will die. God then tells the people—choose life- for life is good with God.

This seems so simple in statements and words but in practise? It is difficult. For if we just reflect a moment on our world and what is happening to creation, to the people and to even education, prosperity and economic situations, defining life as being good may not be the right words. Life is tough for many people in our world. We pray for the people of Turkey-Syria after the earthquake and we wonder what we can do—it was an earthquake with no warning. Then we pray for Ukraine and Russia- war continuing for

the purpose of power and control and we wonder whether life will be 'good' again or when. We might also wonder about the economic crises of the time- heading towards recession with concerns of supplies and demands, people seeking and not finding employment that satisfies, or food security not being evenly distributed. Yet to share these concerns with children and youth we might wonder about the future and whether life may be good?

But God says choose life and prosperity. Life may be filled with difficult moments and concerns affecting others in the world or the people down the road, but life is good because you walk in his way. What does it mean to walk in God's Way?

"Walking on Sunshine" was a one-hit wonder for Katrina and the Waves in 1983. It is an upbeat song about one person waiting to see the one they love again and as they wait for their time together to happen it is as if they are walking on sunshine. They are joyful and very happy because someone loves them! They are smiling from ear to ear, they have a spring in their step and they know in their heart that they are loved. What an amazing thought! To be loved so much that they are floating in the sun's light! They are loved and because of this, they too can love others.

Jesus is continuing to share his sermon from the mountainside in our reading from Matthew 5. He has probably been observing people and their habits all his life. He has talked about those who are blessed, described the people as salt and light and is now teaching them about right living. He reminds them about liability as they interact with each other and what this means when they offer their gifts to God. He understands that there are times that we love others but disagree and we get angry and say things that hurt but what he teaches here is the process towards reconciliation.

Jesus also teaching about sins of the flesh and how to live righteously. He then describes the act of sincerity by letting yes mean yes and no mean no. And he teaches further actions of possible retaliation to cause physical harm or taking of goods. He states that people are to give to everyone who begs and not refuse anyone who sees to borrow. What is Jesus saying in all of these? He is saying the words God said many years ago- words which call people to obey His commandments and to walk His way. Jesus says that if you follow these teachings- you will have life. But he also states,

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven." God makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. We are to strive to be perfect, as God is perfect.

As we reflect on this for a moment, yes the whole world wakes up to sunshine and rain but it is up to individuals to choose how to respond to what the world experiences. Do we complain that it is raining or do we look for rainbows? Do we look at the sun and say it's too hot/ cold. Whatever we respond we are to answer God's call to walk His way. However it is up to people to choose to walk out of darkness and walk in the path of light. It is up to individuals to choose life a good life as Jesus calls us to live. Choosing life with God means following His commandments but it also means living as Jesus taught. With reconciliation in our hearts, being true to our word, giving to others, and loving enemies as they search for the truth. The ideal way to live is perfection and this is what we might strive for, but reality tells us that God alone is perfect.

What does it mean to walk in Christ's light? When Jesus was born the star shone brightly over the world indicating that the saviour had come to earth. We have looked to Jesus as this Light that will guide as we live our lives. And as Jesus taught we are blessed if we live by choosing the way of God- doing justice, loving kindness and being humble servants. We walk in Christ's light because he leads us and we follow the path laid out for our lives. We follow Jesus because the road ahead is not always easy. There are challenges as we move forward in faith and with each chapter of our life. But knowing that Jesus walked where we are walking helps us to know that we're not alone.

Walking in Christ's light means that we are not in the dark about our future and who we follow. This is because choices are made to lead and guide us. So what are we to decide? Choose joy. Choose happy. And choose to shine!

**PRAYER:**

God of grace we praise you and ask that you would always lead us and guide us as we seek to shine for you. We walk in the light of Christ and only ask that you will show us what we need each day. Reveal to us your glory as we are changed by faith. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.