

Sunday, November 14, 2021

Ephesians 6:10-17, Psalm 119:105-112 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Dressed for Faith in Christ

How many books are there in the Bible? 66 What anniversary is Glenwood United Church recognizing today? 66 No, there is not a coincidence in today's focus on faith and what it means to be a serving Christ Jesus. This was planned in order to raise our understanding of the Bible and to celebrate Glenwood Church as a community of faith of the UCC, and an important part of the area of the city called South Windsor!

Some people ask the age- old question is the Bible still relevant to people living in the 21st century? A counter question is: was the Bible relevant to those living in the 19th, 15th or even 10th century and the simple answer is yes. The Bible is relevant because it is filled with stories, expressions, statements and wonder filled words that bring comfort, hope, support, example and most of all the story of Jesus as the Promised Saviour for the world's people throughout time. The Bible contains God's messages written through people about people's lives and the story of hope, fear, wonder and faith. The Bible is filled with 66 books which explore the history of people with prophesies leading to Jesus' birth, death and resurrection. It is still the bestselling book and still inspires people to read and be transformed and changed through faith.

A question often asked is, from where do we get the Bible? The languages of the original text of the Bible- Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament- were recorded hundreds of years ago. Which books were to be included in the Bible was debated by Christian leaders over many years. A key verse about why the Bible is important is found in 2 Timothy 3: "All scripture is inspired by God". This means that God's Spirit-breathed into the hearts of those who were to write His story what was to be stated and recorded. The purposes of the written record as God inspired them to be:.

Purposes of the Bible

- 1) Teaching: what are we taught—the stories of people like Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Jacob—and their life stories of faithfulness, of deception, of punishment and yet growing as leaders
- 2) Reproof--is a negative comment, reprimand, or rebuke because of bad behaviour. ie your scolding words are an example of a reproof.
- 3) Correction: refers to the action or process of correcting – setting something right.
- 4) Training in righteousness - that we learn the story of Jesus and his teachings; as well as what being Christian means today and how to live in right following the path of good living, and service to others.

The Bible then becomes the means through which everyone learns about God, belongs to God and is then equipped to do every good work.

What is amazing is that no matter how many times one reads this text; the purpose of Bible still continues to be understood. Because it is one source through which we experience God's Spirit. Each time one reads the different texts contained, something new is learned, revealed and this inspires us to carry on as we grow closer in relationship with- God—F,S and Spirit.

This is what makes the Bible the most amazing book there is! Someone has said that "the Bible is deep enough for a theologian to drown in and yet shallow enough for a child of God to wade in." God tutors us on our own levels of understanding. It does not matter how young or old, or smart or simple, we may be: the Bible has correction for us to take in and refreshment for us to wade in ... so let's wade in! But we must open it up to learn, open our hearts and let God's Spirit in!

Our children's story lifts up Paul's ideas of what it means to be strong in the Lord and to understand God's power of his might. To be strong Christians we need to be prepared to meet anyone who might question us about Jesus, about our faith and what it means to be and have a relationship with God, Jesus and the Spirit. At the time of Paul's writing to the Ephesians, the church was young and people were unsure of the way of Jesus. They knew about the Son of God who died and rose to life, but the people were afraid of what might happen to them if they showed that they believed. The established Church and state leaders held power and yet were so threatened by the Way of Jesus. They did not understand that Jesus . Paul states, that they needed to be prepared to stand up for their faith. So do we! We need to be prepared as there will be times, when we need to stand up for what we believe and this means dressing for faith for the sake of Jesus.

Paul uses images of a person getting dressed for battle- as many of those hearing his words could relate to battle dress. They had seen Roman warriors combat ready and so Paul describes the necessary safety tools and defenses. And then he states, "Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. Keep alert and pray." Sometimes this is really all we need to do- pray, but often it is the last thing we attempt. But we should not—God is with us always and if we pray He will hear, answer and give us what we need in the moment- strength and encouragement, comfort and support, or reasons for us to rejoice. Just like he gave strength to Moses as he faced Pharaoh and asked him to release the Israelite slaves into freedom. Just like he encouraged Saul to speak to Ananias right after seeing Jesus' and coming to be a follower instead of our killer of Christians. Even in those moments in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus agonized and prayed over what was to occur with his arrest, trial and crucifixion. God heard all these prayers and responded. God hears us and responds in love with a yes, no, or not yet depending upon circumstances.

The word of God is living and active. It is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the earth. (Hebrews 4:12) But what are we doing to learn these words? To take in

and understand these words written and translated for our understanding, what are we doing to put these words into action. Tell the good news Jesus said. How are we faithfully doing this?

We give thanks to God that we have received into full membership a couple and a family. God's Spirit has touched their hearts so that they will continue their faith journey as a part of Glenwood Church. As a community of faith, we have welcomed them and through their decision to walk with us, we are renewed in our call to love each other and to share in all that life may offer and bring to us. But now it is up to each of us to faithfully share Christ's love with each other and to show this love as we continue to focus on learning and living Jesus' way.

As we recognize the 66th anniversary of our church, as we give thanks to God for His word to us in the Bible, let us be reminded of our task as believers and Christians to read the Bible and meditate on its message for who we are today. There are many different devotion books—we have Our Daily Bread at the back table but no matter what you use as a guide, it is important to take the time to just read the text from the Bible.

From the Canadian Bible Society's "The Bible Course," we consider two questions: WHAT What did this passage mean in its context? NOW WHAT? Now what does this passage mean for my life today? How we respond to these questions enables you to reflect on its significance for your life. Then we are to pray and ask God to help us to apply these truths to our lives. For this is what we are needing today- the truth of God's love given to us in Jesus Christ and the promise that Jesus stated, that one day we will be with Him in heaven.

How we learn and grow in these promises of God is what we are called to do as a church family, as believers and followers of God, and people of the Word who come to know and learn how much the Bible may influence and impact our lives. Let us remember this as we give thanks and praise to God this day! Let us pray:

Holy God of grace and love, we thank you for the Bible and the words and stories and teachings it contains which help us in our every day living. You inspired writers so long ago to record life stories and prophecies which have taught us to know who you are and who Jesus may be in our lives. Move your spirit amongst us O God, as we praise and thank you for this church whose focus in our making disciples and teaching the biblical foundation of your love for us all. Bless us O God as we share now with you our thoughts and questions and as we listen for your voice to speak to us—through your word, your message, your song. In faith ,we pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.