

## Your Word is a Lamp to my Feet – 10 July 2011

*Genesis 25:19-34; Psalm 119:105-112; Romans 8:1-11; Matthew 13:1-23*

Help finish this sentence with me. *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.* Again: *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

On Friday night as we walked into Hall Cottage, Beryl and Michael greeted us with torches so that we could see the way to the cottage in the dark. They literally lit the path to the door.

Many years ago when we lived in field camps in the Northern Territory, right out in the bush we got used to walking around the campsite in the light of the moon and the stars. Our eyes adjusted to the natural environment and it was amazing how bright the stars are without artificial light around. But one night on a moonlight night, our technical officer, a man very experienced in the bush, almost stepped on a King Brown snake as it lay across the dusty path formed by our feet going to the mess tent and back. In the pale moonlight it just blended in with the colour of the ground. We all quickly realised that we need to light our path to avoid danger; even in a place that we knew well on paths we had formed ourselves.

So how does the Word of God do this for us in our daily lives?

Let's discover some ways made know to us in the Scriptures.

We are told in Heb 4:12 that God's Word in the Scriptures is indeed "*living and active and sharper than a double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*"

As we read God's word it helps us discover where the thoughts and attitude of our hearts are not right. It goes into our inner depths, places that we can't easily see about ourselves and helps us put our inner beings right with God.

This aspect of the Word is mentioned in 2 Tim 3:15-17

*V 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Many here have known the scriptures since childhood – and they make us wise for salvation.*

*V 16 All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the woman or man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every work.*

Scripture, the main way we hear God's Word, is God breathed. It teaches us. It helps us see where we have gone astray or off the path, or where we are walking with snakes, and draws us back into a life of righteousness.

Scripture equips us for God's work. In every situation of serving God, whether it be in the shop or in the sanctuary, we each are equipped daily by reading daily God's word. What a blessing this is to have ongoing equipping in our work.

So 1<sup>st</sup> point:

The Word of God teaches and equips us, helping us in our daily walk and work for God.

2<sup>nd</sup> point:

The Word of God feeds us.

Mat 4:4 *"Jesus answered, it is written: man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

We are living with starvation rations if we are not seeking to know God's Word, and we are **well fed** when we do take it in daily.

3rdly: Just as the Word of God creates it also produces increase, multiplication.

The parable of the sower, which we have today in Matthew's gospel, is given by Jesus to help us understand the word and its impact.

V 19 when anyone hears the Word and does not understand it, it is like seed falling on the path. The way to avoid this is to seek understanding every time we hear the word, God's message to us.

V 20-21 the description of the rocky ground is a way for us to realise that the word needs to take root, even if it is received at first with joy – we need to let it take root and not wipe it when life gets tough and troubles come. The best weapon in times of trouble is to declare out the Word of God. Speak it out in prayer and belief and it is God's sword in action.

The parable also shows when we can let worries of this life choke the Word. We need to ponder on the Word rather than the troubles.

But the good news is that when we hear the word and understand it we are like the good soil producing huge results.

One message I really get from this parable is to pursue understanding. If there is anything that we find hard to understand in God's word, and there are plenty, pursue understanding. Sometimes we find it by searching the other scriptures and let scripture interpret Scripture for us. But searching until it becomes 'light' for us makes it deeply understood and then fruitful.

The main idea from this is that we are not to stay passive about the way we receive God's word. This is why preaching is so important in the life of the church – because it helps us pursue understanding.

The greatest help we have in understanding the word is God's great gift to us – the Holy Spirit. John 14:26 *But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father*

*will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

We were reminded in today's Romans' reading that we *are in the realm of the Spirit*, if God lives in us and also that *if Christ is in you ... the Spirit gives life because of righteousness*. (8:9-10).

Let us remember when we read the Word to ask the Spirit of God to teach us all things and give increased knowledge, understanding and life. In the parable of the sower Jesus emphasised that we really need to pursue understanding. Then, in the generosity of our God we have the Spirit to teach us this. God is so good and so generous, providing for our every need. God knows that we need the Word to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, to keep us on the path of righteousness.

In our first reading from Genesis 25 I noticed that Esau despised his birthright, what would be his inheritance. What do we despise that has become our inheritance once we belong to Christ and have Christ within? Many treat the word the same way Esau treated his birthright and treated it cheaply, because he didn't value it.

Reading the scriptures it stands out that God has a high view of His word. That's good enough for me and I'll strive in gaining understanding, for even in the parts of the Bible that we know well, we can always gain more understanding. I have been so encouraged when Herb and Marjorie come along to the Bible studies I have offered, for they, well into their nineties, are still pursuing the Word and deeper understanding of it.

A Bible verse given to this parish quite some time ago is Isaiah 55. And today I quote from v 9-11.

*As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

*As the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,*

*So is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

This is the Word of God:

- It is good for teaching, for guiding, for revealing God's thoughts and ways to us, His statutes and commandments.
- It needs to be pursued actively for understanding.
- It is not to be despised or undervalued.
- And in fact it carries such a power in it, it never returns empty to God and it always achieves God's purpose in it being spoken.

There is incredibly great power in God's word being spoken out – because it achieves immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine as we speak it. When we pray for others use a Bible verse. We can continue to learn new verses until the day we die. God's authority is in the Word and we can use it for breakthrough prayers for praying for others. Daily we see people we love in trouble or suffering and using God's word is a powerful way to pray.

If someone is struggling with guilt and has already confessed their sin, I declare out in prayer from the word that *there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* (Rom 8:1). And because it is living and active –the Word cuts through and the person is released from guilt and shame. It becomes God's word for that person at that time and the person is set free from condemnation.

How powerful is that!!

One word that came to Pete and I when we were struggling financially on one small salary was to give 10% to God of our income. Malachi 3:10 *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the flood gates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.*

We had a deep conviction that we were to give 10% of our income first to God and so organised our finances to give that before we even saw it rather than hope there was enough left at the end of the fortnight. From that time on God has blessed us abundantly, and indeed any church that I have led that took that message to heart.

Let us let the word of God illuminate our path each day, feed us and be an active way to pray for others with authority. Let us remember that God has promised many things to do with His word – as he values it highly – and indeed that it will always accomplish what He purposes with it when it goes forth. What a privilege to partner with him in speaking it to others, in encouragement or in prayer.

God has given us the word to protect us from the snakes on the path of life and to guide us in righteousness on the path to eternity.

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

Let us pray: