

Walking God's Way - Righteousness Part 2

Deut 10:12-22; Ps 119:1-8; 1 Cor 3:1-9; Matt 5:21-37

In this Epiphany season we are enjoying readings about living according to God's principles and standards. Two weeks ago we had the Sermon on the Mount and how to live our faith from the inward life informing and enabling and the outward life. A key for the theme of righteousness is Matthew 5:6 "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness*".

Last week we learnt something of what righteousness is.

- That it is part of a covenant relationship with God.
- That we have righteousness by, and through, the free gift to us that happened with the Divine Exchange on the Cross. It is a priceless gift.
- That it is a choice – we deliberately choose it as a lifestyle and the way to walk with God.
- That it is about living a 'squeaky clean' life.
- That God desires us to seek it.

Today I want to call it **Plan A living**.

The question we all face each day whether we are conscious of it or not, and one that faced Jesus every day He was on earth is: Are we going to live God's way or our way?

Plan A is God's way – which we accept by faith.

Plan B is the world's way, which is a natural product of human logic, planing and intuition.

There are times when God's way doesn't seem to make sense to us from the way we see things. But God has told us that His ways are not our ways – His ways are higher (Isa 55:8-9) and we take that on faith.

However, we are born into the world and its ways of thinking and living are programmed into our minds. If we don't actively seek to know God's ways and obey them we will by default continue to live the way we always have before Jesus became Lord of our lives.

If Jesus is not fully Lord of our lives, if there are areas of our lives that are "ours" and not God's then we are double minded and often have a lot of anxiety.

This mixing of our ways with God's ways is not wise and decreases our commitment to Plan A – God's plan.

I'll give an example of this principle from marriage. Plan A – from God – is for marriage to be a life long monogamous relationship between a man and a woman who are to stay faithful and committed to each other until death parts them.

What would happen if a couple enter marriage thinking they could always get a divorce if the relationship didn't work out? They are already considering Plan B and they probably will end up in divorce because commitment is what makes the marriage relationship unique.

So in our walk with Jesus we have to watch out for sneaky Plan B considerations.

So let's look at today's readings from the point of Plan A, God's plan, for our lives and see it through verse 1 of Psalm 119. "*Blessed are those whose way is blameless; who walk in the law of the Lord.*"

This is the way of righteousness as we learnt last week. We are so blessed when we live rightly, when we live a life of righteousness – God's plan for our lives.

Now the plan we live by and the outplaying of it while on earth will be judged. Every thought, every word, every action will be judged.

What do we say in our confession every Sunday?

Merciful God – God's nature is mercy.

Our maker and our judge – speaks of God's roles. Indisputable roles.

We have sinned against You – every unrighteous act is against God. It is usually disobedience or rebellion.

How do we sin?

In *thought, word and deed*.

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus gives an example of sinning in our thoughts when He mentions that it is possible to commit adultery in our heads. This happens more and more these days with people accessing the porn sites on the Internet and it is sin.

Jesus mentions words: saying terms of contempt to others such as "you fool" has us in danger of the fire of hell (v22). It is important to know God's ways for God does not want us to head towards those fires.

Jesus reminds us to sort out with actions issues with others – resolve conflict. He says don't come to God's table having done something to offend

a brother of sister – sort it out with them first. *We have not loved or neighbours as ourselves.*

Verses 33-7 remind us to be careful what we swear – breaking an oath is serious business but God doesn't like us taking an oath by anything rather let our 'yes' be a 'yes' and our 'no' a 'no' – don't go beyond this.

Our Epistle today has Paul put the juxtaposition of the sort of immaturity that stunts our growth as Christians. He tells us that:

- if we look at the leaders instead of God. Paul/Apollos, Trish/Helen;
- if we look for only milk and not meat in our teaching and preaching;
- if we quarrel among ourselves:

Then Paul has to ask the question in v 3 “Are you not worldly?”

In his frustration he is saying ‘which plan are you on?’ And in fact in that same verse he tells them in no uncertain terms that they are following Plan B “*you are still worldly*” – they are not walking with Jesus on Plan A.

Paul reminds Plan A followers that:

- we have one purpose;
- that we are God's fellow workers;
- and we are God's building.

We are individually and together God's building. The building that houses the almighty, holy God is a temple. So a reminder that we, the temple for God to dwell in, must be a righteous dwelling fit for a Holy King.

Moving from Paul's question of which plan are you on and do you realise the significance of it we go to our first reading today, Deuteronomy. It is such a great reading. It is a how to walk in Plan A.

It tells what God requires of us, what God asks of us.

V 12

- To fear the Lord,
- To walk in all His ways,
- To love Him,
- To serve God with all our heart and soul,
- To observe God's commandments and decrees.

Now if we are to truly apply the things we learn from the Word of God to our lives then it is essential for us to ponder on and live out what we learn from it. Ideally it would be good to discuss the sermon together after church, talk about what we each got from the preaching and how we can pursue it further in our lives.

How do we learn more about the fear of the Lord, or encourage each other in this? It is the first one mentioned in v 12. Fear of the Lord enables us to walk in righteousness.

Psalm 19:9 tells us that *the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever, the ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous.*

Fear of the Lord is pure, clean and lasts forever.

Psalm 111:10 *“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom all who follow His precepts have good understanding.”*

What do we hunger and thirst for?

Things that satisfy our worldly natural desires or things that are part of God’s plan A for us?

Psalm 103:11 *“for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him”.*

I think all of us want to be greatly loved by God – so seeking and asking the Holy Spirit for an increased ‘fear of the Lord’ is part of this.

The book of Ecclesiastes in Chapter 12 puts it rather succinctly that God’s way, Plan A, is to be our way: *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.”* (Ecc 12: 13 KJV)

So that is God’s way – righteousness involving a holy fear of the Lord is God’s way – God’s plan for our lives. If we wish to dwell with Jesus, to be His, His ways are righteous and we choose each day each moment which way we walk in – Plan A or Plan B - and Psalm 119 reminds us how blessed we are when we live God’s way – a blameless way, seeking God with our whole heart.

Friends, for those who would walk with Jesus righteous living is The Way – the way of purity and blamelessness. It is when our YES is a YES to God and to living His ways.

Knowing His ways is vital to our Yes and that is why this Book the Bible is so important to read and understand.

Living Plan A, living righteously is a day by day, moment by moment opportunity to say Yes to God.

It is as step-by-step journey. That's how Jesus lived – moment by moment.

Step by step He said YES by YES to His Father.

The story of Noah is an example of what comes from step by step giving a 'yes' to God. The Bible tells us that *“Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God”*. He built an ark at God's command. This was no mean feat – it was huge and he must have felt foolish by the world's eyes, as there was no water near by. Then he collected animals to put on it. He collected and placed food on it. The Bible simply says: *“Noah did everything just as God commanded him.”* then he was told to go into the ark with his whole family and the animals. Then from these steps of obedience the ark itself became God's vehicle of salvation for Noah and his family, and a wonderful covenant for all humanity was given. Noah got to a really big result from small steps of obedience – he got there step by step.

We only have to take little steps and God looks after the big things from it. It is not hard to live out His Plan A when we take it step by step and we can encourage each other on the way.

So the Plan is: STEP BY STEP, YES BY YES to God and God's ways, God's principles, God's commandments.

And God gives us all we need for this. 2 Peter 1 *“ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him...”* (v 3)

Plan A - Walk righteously with God:
Step by step
Yes by yes.

Let us pray: