

The Way x05. Sunday 03 February_2019.

STONES – MARKER STONES ON THE WAY.

READ: (“CF” – *Country File* clip on maze stone walling and engraving).

1 Samuel 7: 2 – 13.

We aim to see through our study and reflection on Scripture this year a clear thread of teaching and revelation about God showing **a way forward and a way through that we can follow.**

There are prophecies in the **OT** about this and we heard a little of this in our Watch Night gathering from *Isaiah 43: 19 – 21* on *I’m making a way through the desert.*

In the early Church “*the Way*” became a title describing followers of Jesus - before the term Christian was used. So we read of men and women who “*belonged to the Way*” (*Acts 9:2; 22:4*) Jesus’ own claim in response to questions that he is the Way to the Father God.

In Scripture, there is abundant advice for the path in life which will provide the most meaning and fulfillment. Our path refers to *the way* we live and what we decide to do with our limited time on earth.

We enter 2019 with the knowledge that even though we step into a season of transition and change we have the Light of God with us to guide us in the way that we should go: *Psalms 119: 105* *Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light to my path.*

TODAY:- 2 key points.

1)Jesus First – preeminent. In everything e.g. relationships. Who do I love the most? How do I demonstrate this?

Is Jesus preeminent in my life or of lesser importance than other people or things?

To say and live a “Jesus First” life means that Jesus is more important than anyone or anything else. He is truly God in reality but also in my heart. He is more important than any other. Jesus surpasses all others in his goodness...Jesus is not comparable to any other in his qualities and actions.

Love for Jesus – “Jesus First” spoken of last Sunday by Lee Johnson. This definitely has the edge on “Jesus be the centre” -although love for Jesus is from the heart. We can gather around Jesus and his teaching (as we do at least on Sundays together) but also Jesus calls us to ***follow him***, as well as be with him. He is the Good Shepherd who leads out the sheep. He calls us to be obedient to his voice.

We are called by Jesus to live sacrificially, and the old saints I knew used to speak of **JOY** coming from putting *Jesus first, others next and yourself last.* (J.O.Y.) There is a great and costly truth in these simple words. Believing Jesus to be preeminent means

his command to love neighbour as I love myself will call me to live a different kind of life than I would if I simply loved myself and my nearest and dearest.

This year's theme is The Way and this is about putting Jesus First. The first word from God was given the promise that God will make a Way in the wilderness and I believe that is developed in the second word brought last Sunday. HOW will God make a Way? By us putting "Jesus First".

Discovering the Way is also about recognizing particular points on the journey and also that these events are significant to us and also tell a story – they bear witness to others that see the marker stones and remind us.

2)STONES – MARKER STONES. There is a long and ancient history of placing stones and cairns **both to mark the way or act as some sort of witness** – all over the world including significantly in Iceland, Scotland and many other places....**I wonder what are the marker stones in your life and history?** Between the marker stones of "birth" and "death" – what other stones would be placed in the intervening years and events?

- "McNie grave stone" or burial monument – history and herstory... Fading engraving and memory...other than birth and death date what would you want written? "**MIZPAH**" - is a name from the Bible. It is mostly used to refer to a place near Gilead (*Judges 11.29*). Its first usage (*Gen 31.49-50*) refers to it as a pillar of stones set up by Jacob and Laban. The pillar of stones acted as a **witness** to the bond between the two men – where treachery and lying had been involved as well as promises. "*May the LORD keep an eye on us (watch over us to see if we live lives of justice) while we are separated from each other*". **A pile of stones set there to remind them of what they had promised to one another. Ancient stones in Scripture & history.**
- VPBC Foundation Stone 1869 – in front of chapel. *Build on no other foundation than Christ...*
- "Country File" video clip – stones with initials carved "CF" – at that moment in time.
- Marker points on the Way and cairns: What is the purpose of a cairn?

In addition to trail markers, cairns are built for **burial monuments**, ceremonial purposes, hunting, etc. They range in size from small stone markers to artificial hills. We've built pyramids and castles with stones and painstakingly cleared them out of farm fields, using them to build low dry-stone walls for fencing. ... These piles are NOT true cairns, the official term for deliberately stacked rocks. From middle Gaelic, the word means "mound of stones built as a memorial or landmark."

- "**Ebenezer**"- stone of help **1 Samuel 7: 12** *Then Samuel took a stone, set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and said, "The LORD has helped us all the way"--and he named it "Stone of Help."*

- Basilea Schlink – and sisters build cairns with Scripture messages or witnesses to truth all over the earth. She was German born 1904, academic, religious leader and writer, co-founder (1947) and leader of the Evangelical Sisters of Mary. (slide Cairns – Basilea Schlink 1)

Some years later Schlink was living in a badly bombed Germany with few resources, but it was important for her to repent for Germany's cruel treatment of other nations during the war, especially the Jews. She felt the temptation to marry like other young women did. Instead she gave her mission the priority, and so she became a Sister of Mary.

All followers of the Way are called to give Jesus preeminent love – whether married or celibate, whatever form of work and mission we engage in - to follow Jesus is always a “Jesus first” call. (*Matthew 6: 21 Your heart will always be where your riches are. V33 Instead be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things*). If every follower of the Way throughout the earth did put “Jesus First” what would it look like?

What would God carve on our stone? Revelation 2: 17. *God will give us a white stone with a new name carved on it.* (In our studies into marker stones we will look at what that might mean).

What would others carve? What might others say about us when we are no longer here or even now while we are alive?

What would we want carved? Probably not too much. Certainly not the whole record of my life...my failings and my few great moments or times. Only God knows all that... God knows my birth and my death dates and everything in between. The significant points of worth and value...some want that defined narrowly and intensely in the terms of career and work achievements, some just in terms of family and off spring...How do you want your life described? Probably best to say just a very little – not too much.

Maybe? he/she increasingly put Jesus first, others next and herself last and lived life to the full?