

***The Way x10. Sunday 10 March 2019.***

**Shoes for the Way.**

**READ: Ephesians 6: 10 - 18 and Isaiah 59: 15b – 18.**

**This year** we aim to see through our study and reflection on Scripture a clear thread of teaching and revelation about God showing **a way forward and a way through that we can follow** – whether we are journeying in an easy friendly place or the hostile wilderness.

There are prophecies in the **OT** about **GOD making a way in the wilderness (Isaiah 43: 19-21)** for his people. In the early Church “*the Way*” became a title describing the followers of Jesus - before the term Christian was used. We read of men and women who “*belonged to the Way*” (Acts 9:2; 22:4) because presumably of Jesus’ own claim in John 14 and in response to questions that he is the Way to the Father God – he is the way through the wilderness.

**In the wilderness** there are no pre-marked, tarmacked roads. The way through the wilderness is not obvious and must be discovered by journeying and perhaps listening to others and watching out for key marker stones that tell and show how others have crossed over and journeyed through. In a spiritual sense the way forward needs to be discovered by revelation every step of the way. The terrain in the wilderness is often hostile and by definition it is often a place of solitude. The wilderness is also in Scripture seen as a place where God can be encountered and heard, and people empowered.

**We seek the Way of Jesus – to see how he lived his life and won his battles.** LENT journey towards the suffering of Easter has begun and last Sunday we began in our talks to follow Jesus on the Way of obedience and testing.

**According to the teaching of *Philippians 2* we need to have the same attitude as Jesus – v8 “*he was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death – his death on the cross*”.**

**Jesus** came to fight and win the greatest spiritual battle of all time but he did not use the weapons of this world to defeat evil (the world the flesh and the devil) *2 Corinthians 10: 4* but in his life his righteousness was tested and in his suffering passion and on the Cross and in the tomb he used his mighty power.

**Jesus – messiah will be the *Prince of PEACE: Isaiah 9: 6* –** and angels sang of this at his birth. His mission to bring peace into the world. Last year we spoke of 5 dimensions of newness (*Bruce Milne*) that we as humans experience through our relationship with Jesus. **These are areas of peace, wholeness and wellbeing. Jesus comes to MAKE PEACE** not simply keep the peace. ***Ephesians 2: 17 Christ came and preached the Good News of peace...***

- With God *Romans 5: 1 We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus...*
- Within ourselves *John 14: 27 My peace I give you...*

- With neighbour
- With environment
- With time

Most people remember that in the OT war, violence and conquest feature at regular intervals – and God’s people are engaged in these. Unrighteousness and evil practices are taken very seriously whether they are committed by the Hebrews or by people of other nations – child sacrifices, slavery and exploitation are not ignored by God. These are not easy passages to read – because although they contain warnings against doing evil and that there are consequences to evil practices – there are more than warnings and the slaughter of humans and animals and the destruction of property in war is awful and at times wholesale. We struggle to hold together judgement and justice and mercy. I think that it is ultimately only possible to hold these together in Jesus – who takes our punishment so that we may experience the mercy of God and go free.

**God is depicted by Isaiah as also the “Divine Warrior” – but the descriptions are of God warring specifically against unrighteousness.** (This is not some Judeo-Christian commentators argue either primitive, gratuitous or unnecessary violence but a long delayed, long overdue action of justice. Death is visited upon humanity and all of creation).

In *Isaiah 59: 15b – 18* **God in his righteous character** is said to wear justice like a coat of armour and saving power like a helmet.

Also, Isaiah declares: *52: 7* **How beautiful are the feet of the person who brings good news and publishes peace!**

**Jesus Christ is also depicted as the “Divine Warrior” as well as the Divine Peacemaker.**

Christ also wars and battles against evil and injustice. His victory finally upon the Cross and in resurrection is the basis of our victory. We are called upon by the Spirit to take up the character of the Divine Warrior who battles for justice and against unrighteousness. Paul is talking about spiritual strength and being UNITED with the Lord and knowing the MIGHTY POWER (of resurrection 1: 19, 20) in our lives.

**V14 We are to STAND – to BE READY.** And that readiness comes from the “Gospel of peace”. **V15 As your shoes the readiness (equipment HETOIMASA) to announce (genitive) the Good News of Peace.**

Our main enemy is not flesh and blood – either our own or others – but spiritual enemies and powers. Our weapons are not of this world/ carnal (*2 Corinthians 10:4*)

**We are to be propelled by the gospel of peace into the world.** Leaders are to equip (*4:12*) all the followers of Jesus with the Gospel of Peace. We need to know what the Good News of Peace is. Peace through Jesus Christ is Good News for me, Good News for us and Good News for those who have not yet heard it.

We have a complete (PANOPLIA) of armour but **today we are thinking about both standing and walking in the Way of Jesus**. Our feet need to be protected but more than that. Paul is heard surely thinking about the sandals of the Roman legionary (CALIGA) – the half “boot” where the toes are free, soles studded with bone and flint to stop slipping, straps of leather to the ankle and calf to the knee. They **equip** the wearer for **long marches and give flexibility, stability and mobility**. Our feet are vulnerable without **protection**. Sandals/ shoes are our foundation garment. As we walk the city streets and also the wilderness, we need the right foot ware and Paul says that it is “the Good News of peace” that equips us to go anywhere and be anywhere. The Good News of peace through Jesus equips us for our everywhere – the workplace, the café, the neighbourhood, the family.

**Prepare now for the “evil day” – v13** – whenever that day may be. When your faith and trust is really tested!

We will be ready for war if we have peace on our feet. Steve Motyer p204. (There is to be peace in the church 2: 14 – 17 and 4: 3 and we are to know inner peace).

If we are to STAND in peace – we must stand in the peace of Christ. **Exercise: during Passion Week or before – let JESUS wash your feet**. Wait and be renewed. Maybe your feet are “not peace full?” – feet tired, dirty, old, injured with walking in the world. Remember your feet connect to the rest of your body and being!

**Friend – warrior of Jesus against injustice, bringer of Good News of peace – now is not the time to put on your slippers**. Stand not in your bare feet, stand not in your slippers or your stockinged feet. Stand with your Caliga sandals on for protection, flexibility, stability and mobility READY TO GO. (Essex girl: Not white sling backs!)

*“Missionary work is like a pair of sandals that have been given to the Church in order that it shall set out on the road and keep on going to make known the mystery of the Gospel”.* Johannes Blauw, The Missionary Nature of the Church.



**Blessing prayer: May we walk in the Way of Jesus according to the truth he has revealed. May we choose the life that he offers on the way of obedience.**

**We pray for strength for the journey and right relationship with all we meet this week on the road.**

**We ask for grace to make the choices with humility. We ask that we may always engage with the world in mission and not walk by on the other side.**

**We are within the love of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.**