

Apostle Service

1st November 2009

Text is Matthew Chapter 5 verses 13-16.

Our text for today we all recognise is a teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the multitudes as they gathered before Him on the mount. It was to try and convert the Jewish people to recognise Him as the Messiah and He was telling them of their obligation in this role. We know they rejected Him, and His words were the truth. They now transpire to the church.

It is not just a coincidence that the Lord spoke of the salt and the light. The two are very strongly linked together as obligations of the church. The Jewish people understood what He was saying about salt. We today only have a partial understanding. In the Jewish tradition and in the Jewish law the salt played a very important part. There were all degrees of salt. There was the best, a highest grade of salt that could be mined. It was used for a specific purpose, and that purpose was to seal what was called the covenant of salt. A covenant is an agreement between two parties. A covenant is something that is wished to make it preserved and to make it last forever. The salt was used by the Jewish people when they made an agreement and they held hands, or shook hands on the agreement we would say. This high quality salt was sprinkled over the handshake and then eaten by the two parties as a sign that they wanted that covenant preserved, that agreement preserved forever.

He was calling on the Jewish nation to remember that His Father had made a covenant with them, that they would be

His people and they could inherit the Kingdom of God provided they held their part of the covenant. The Father had held His part. He had kept His blessings to them down through the ages, but He was reminding them that if they did not use the very best salt to preserve this then the degrees of salt would come about. He is reminding the Christian Church that we too have been given a covenant, a promise, the new covenant, a promise through Christ and through the Heavenly Father that the Holy Spirit would labour within our midst and prepare us for a coming kingdom, but there are obligations in any covenant.

He is urging us to take whatever the strongest power that we can find and seal that covenant with that. The strongest power is described in the Scriptures as the Blood of Christ. Through the Blood of Christ it can bind and link us in a way that it cannot be broken, and through the power of the Holy Spirit this Blood of Christ is given unto us to enable us to seal that covenant.

The second grade of salt was used by the Jewish people to salt down their sacrifices that they offered unto God. There were very few sacrifices mentioned in their law that did not require this salting. It was to preserve the memory and to preserve that sacrifice as a clean sacrifice that it was not falling away or rotting or becoming smelly. The sacrifices were made to bring about reconciliation again with God.

We today also have the ability where we fall and fail in fulfilling the covenant, we have the ability to go to God and offer a sacrifice unto Him, the sacrifice of repentance and humbleness and meekness, and we too should use that power, the power of the Holy Spirit to

preserve it, not just idle words, but to preserve the meaning and understand that we have now fallen from sin, but as the Officers have so ably sung unto us – Come to Jesus, never cease praying, He can reconcile us through His grace. The grace that we receive allows us the ability to salt those sacrifices of repentance and the petitions for grace within our lives and give back to God.

The next grade of salt as it slipped away, God did not reject it completely. It was used as a fertiliser or in the cow paddocks to break down the fertilisers. It still had the opportunity to bring about growth. The grace of Christ calls us at all times to come to Him, use what gifts we still have retained as sparks within our lives to fertilise our hearts and fertilise the fields of God, and allow growth to come back again. If we do not, the last quality of salt as He said has no savor at all, it is of no use. It was used in those days to place on the roads, to patch the holes where men could walk on it. He was telling the Jewish people, and it is the same message for us today that if we allow this blessing that has been given to the church to fade away, the church will become a ridicule in the eyes of man, and men will walk over it, and laugh and mock and scorn at this so called church receiving the blessings of God. We can see that it was a very strong warning.

He then linked it with where and what we should be trying to achieve. He linked it with light because light as we have already heard, God is light. When the world was created it was without form and it was darkness, and God said – Let there be light, and there was light. What was this light? We search the Scriptures and we find that the light that was spoken of is the glory of God. The Apostle Paul wrote

to Timothy and he reminded him that God and now Christ are encased in this light, the glory of God, into which they can live and dwell, but no man can enter therein, no man can look upon it and live so bright and so glorious is this light.

God in His love decided to share that light with mankind. He brought that light at the creation and He said – Let there be light. When we look at the light in the world today we should see God's glory. It is not the fullness of that glory, because we would not be able to look upon it and live. God knew that and He sent His only begotten Son in the form of man to bring with Him that portion of the light that could be distributed in the world for a purpose. What is that purpose? What is the aim? What did God's plan have in mind? His plan was that fleshly man should stand in the light, that would be able to stand in the presence of God and see His face and to rejoice.

The preparation must be made. We cannot go from darkness straight into light. If we try that and lock ourselves in the darkest of rooms and open the door quickly we are blinded. We need to be prepared so that we can at God's appointed time be drawn and stand in the light of God, and look and see and live. That is His love for mankind. That is why when He created day and night, and He created man and woman, He gave them the choice.

We have all been given a choice in life. He gave them a choice. They chose to be creatures of the day or creatures of the light we would say. They could have chosen to be in the darkness, but they chose to be in the light. God said – It is very good, that choice that was made. We must also make that choice. But we have a greater obligation. The choice is just not

ours personally.

Our Lord taught that a city that is lit is not hidden. We see a group lighting being spoken of. The church must become a light. He then spoke of a candle which is as private light, and how it should not be hidden, and how it should be allowed to shine forth so that those of the household can be in the light. The most important message that He gave on that day, and we must consider it, is when He used the words – Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Think of those words. He did not say that it is good to let your light shine. He did not say to try and let our light shine. It was a commandment, a direct commandment **to let your light shine**.

Every commandment of God must be fulfilled. It is not a choice. If we choose to not accept that as Christ's commandment, then we will be as the salt and we will lose our savor, but if we ask the Holy Spirit and through the Blood of Christ, to give us the strength and the power to be able to complete that commandment then we will go forth. We must not conjure up in our minds a great flashlight, a great torch, that we have to take into the world. It would be good if we can achieve that.

When we were children most of us would have experienced chasing what was called the firefly, the small beetle where its tail lights up. One minute it is lit, then it is gone. Individually it is not a light that we would say is a light that could be used for any great purpose, but when they were collected and placed in a bottle, it then became the means of even being able to read by it and follow our ways through a pathway of darkness. This

is the light that our Lord is speaking of. We all have the ability to bring forth a small amount of light, and collectively it will become a city.

How do we think we can bring this light? It can be done in so many small ways. It must shine so that the Father is glorified, not that we are glorified. We may come across someone who is downtrodden and weary, and a simple word to them to tell them that God loves them and we will remember them in our prayers can be a light, a simple thing in life. When someone is anguishing and paining about what is happening in the world and they are lamenting, a simple word to say to them that it has all been foretold in the Bible and that God will not abandon us, simple acts of faith. Simple little amounts of light going out which will eventually build into a city and allow the world to see and get a glimpse of what the glory of God may look like. Remember it is a commandment. It is not a request. It is a commandment.

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about all the commandments of Christ and how we must approach them, and in 1 Timothy Chapter 6 verse 12 on we read:

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hath professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, which quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontious Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his time he shall show, who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling

in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting.”

He is urging Timothy to learn of the commandments of Christ and to fulfil them. Keep this commandment He said, for it will lead on to a great day when the Lord returns where we will be ushered into this glorious light of God and we will see a vision of glory that none of us in our wildest imaginations could even comprehend. We must keep the commandment to let the light shine within the world. It is the instruction to the church.

The Apostle John saw the church and where it would get this light from, and what it must do in its life when He saw a great wonder in heaven. In Revelation Chapter 12 he saw the vision:

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. There was a war in

heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

We see a great vision of the church shown as a woman, linked between heaven and earth, robed in the Sun or the Righteousness of Christ, this light. The sun which represents our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ's righteousness that is freely available to give us this covering and this preparation that will allow us to stand in the presence of God.

She stood on the moon. The moon is the Apostle teaching. The moon is a lesser light. It only receives its light from the sun. If the sun does not shine on the moon the moon cannot shine. The Sun of Righteousness gives unto His ministry the ability to be also a light. The light the moons gives us, this message from the moon each night, is to fear not the darkness, there will be a new day dawning. That is the message. There will be a new day dawning for the church, a day when we will become part of the Kingdom of God, whether we live or whether we are dead we will all be part of this glory, provided we fulfil the obligation

that is given unto the church.

The twelve stars above represent the twelve-fold Apostle Ministry through whom God will give His teaching. We can see that the stars in the heaven represents the ministries. We have heard that this dragon sweeps a third of those down to the earth. The church will move in many places to teach earthly teaching, not heavenly teaching. We must stay firm and true to this heavenly teaching.

The role of the church is to bring forth the birth of a child, a male child, to bring forth the birth of Christ through the church. A child must have the attributes of the father, and the church must bring forth a child, or like a child we would say, that is the image of Christ. The works, the deeds, the way we live our lives must always continuously represent the image of Christ. We have received His Blood to give life to this birth. We have received the breath of God through the power of the Holy Spirit to allow this conception to take place. We have heard that Satan is ever constant there trying to take this work and this labour of the church away, but it will be to no avail. The church must succeed so that this child, this image of Christ can be drawn up into the throne of God into the glory, into the brightness, into the light of God, where even Satan cannot enter therein and live.

We have heard though that the church is required to be part of this great victory when the angels in heaven have a great war. Angels are equal and God cannot be seen to favour one group over another. This group of angels under Michael have to receive an extra power and that power can only come from the church. This mystical woman who is made out of Christ

and that power must be given unto the angels from the church through God. We heard how that power can be obtained, through the Blood of the Lamb, through the word of their testimonies, that is God's testimonies and Christ's testimony, and today let us meditate on the testimony that Christ has given us through the power of the Holy Spirit – **Let your light so shine in the world.**

Those things must be fulfilled and it then counts as a weapon, and to not love this life even unto death means that we are not concerned with death, for we know there is life after death. We are not robbed of this glorious promise that stands before us. God is yearning for us to provide Him with those things from the church, those gifts, those lights that He can then use to bring about the casting out of Satan, and bring about the victory that Christ deserves. We can see very clearly how this covenant of the salt has to be part of our life, and how the light that God has given to mankind has to be used.

We are still like Adam and Eve, we can make a choice. The choice is ours. We are not compelled to do any of this. We have to be as Adam and Eve and make that choice and be creatures of this light, or walk in the light, or live in the light, or let the light shine out of us so that we can indeed be part of this glorious city that will be set on the hill. Christ said that He was the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, and so it shall be. The beginning was when God said – Let there be light. The ending is a much better story for us or a much better hope. Let us hear the ending found in Revelation Chapter 22 verses 1-5:

**Let
your
light
shine**

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

What a glorious day when we have been prepared to enter into the light of God and live with Him, and see His face, and not have to worry about where this light will come from, and more importantly there will be no curse there. The curse of sin will be gone forever. Let us review how we are going to approach this. Let us make the choice and be a light in the world. Amen.

Apostle Service
Christmas Day
25th December 2009

Text is the Pastoral Letter for Christmas 2009

We have been requested in the Pastoral, as we come before the Lord on this day, to stand in awe and wonder at the mighty love of God in what He has done for mankind. We should be in awe and wonder when we consider how mankind rebelled against Him so many times down through history, even today, but in His love He always had this plan to

draw mankind back to Him, to reconcile again unto Him, and to reward mankind with that promise that He gave to Adam and Eve at the beginning that they could dwell in this wonderful garden and be blessed by Him and receive His blessings night and day, and never partake of death, never know sickness, and never know sorrow.

We know that all of the world when it dispersed at the Tower of Babel turned to worship other gods save for the children of Israel that came out of the faith of Abraham. Already then, God said and promised Abraham that through his seed would all the nations of the world be blessed, but He confirmed that further through Isaac and then through Jacob. We have heard in the Pastoral that He will be a God forever for the household of Jacob. Jacob represents those who are led by the Holy Spirit. It is well if once again we hear the great promise that was given to Jacob and we reflect on it today, and we see how God's word is true, and we can indeed stand in awe and wonder. We find written in the Book of Genesis Chapter 28 verse 12 on as follows, (where Jacob was making a journey and he rested that night):

“And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be

blessed.”

We see therein a promise that was fulfilled through the seed of Jacob, that not only would the Jewish nation be blessed but all the families of the world, no exceptions. The word all, with God means all. We have followed and we have heard of the prophecies that would bring this to pass. We have heard how God spoke through the Psalmist and said – This is my only begotten Son. He said and gave His Son the promise that He would be with Him in trying to restore the children of Israel to the Kingdom of God, but He then added and said unto Him that if He asks He will also give Him the heathen nations of the world.

It opened the door, for God knew in His heart that the children of Israel would reject His Son. He knew that they would be cruel to Him on this earth. He knew that they ultimately beat Him, and that He would have to fulfil every part of the law as punishment. He knew that He would be crucified. And yet in His love He still sent Him into the earth to bring about this glory of God in the highest and to bring about peace, not the peace of the world, but the reconciliation that was shown in this ladder, a link between heaven and earth.

Christ was to become that ladder that blessings could go up and down to the earth, and He could give goodwill in a measure to mankind, and ultimately in the Kingdom of God the fullness of His goodwill. But to do that He knew that His Son would have to suffer beyond any suffering. Remember that His suffering was of an innocent man. That had to happen to bring an end to the law.

Our Lord was faithful in His mission. He was born in humbleness and He lived His life in humbleness. He gave His whole life to the mission that was given unto Him by

His Heavenly Father. At any time He could have evoked God’s word and said – Father, these of the tribe of Israel are rejecting you, allow me to now go and convert the heathens and the Gentiles of this world, but He did not. He remained true to His mission, and it was not until he hung on the cross, and that He had taken all of those things and laboured from the beginning to the end, He then made the request of His Father to fulfil those words. He said, ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.’ It was a prayer. It was an instruction. It was fulfilling that opening that Christ had given Him. He was referring to the heathen nations of the world and the Gentile nations who abandoned God so many years before. He said - They do not know what they do, forgive them.

From that time a complete change was to come within the world. Now this blessing that was sent on this day so many years ago was now to be available to go out into the whole world, and obviously now there had to be a large time frame to allow this to spread through the power of the Holy Spirit into every nation in the world, this wonderful blessing. That work is still continuing today and we should be so thankful and stand in awe and wonder that God in His love for all mankind, for all families in the world, is now opening this door of promise, this door of blessing that will trample underfoot Satan’s gloating and Satan’s power, and win a victory for the Word of God at the appointed time.

This message for all of the families was taken into the hearts of those down through the ages. King David who was chosen to unite the nations of Israel and to stand as a prefiguration of Christ, and was renowned for writing prayers which

were converted into Psalms, was getting to an age where he could see that he would not be in this world much longer. He set about to write a prayer which was originally to be a prayer for his son, Solomon, who would take over from him. As he began to write the words in that Psalm, which is Psalm 72, the Holy Spirit took control of him and it wrote the words that were so powerful that he could not express himself. He knew it was for a future event. He knew it was not for his son. He knew that it was for something to come within the world, and the Scriptures records that when he finished that Psalm he knew there was nothing more to pray for. He had no wisdom or understanding to pray for anything greater than what the words of God had given him in that Psalm, and it is recorded that he never wrote another prayer from that day, because nothing he could write would overshadow that great event. Let us hear the last portion of that Psalm on this day, and let us also imagine how this effected King David and how it should effect us, and we find from verse 11 on as follows:

“Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall serve the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised. There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name

shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.”

It is no wonder King David never wrote another prayer for he saw this event in his mind coming into the earth. We see today the fulfilment and the advancement of this. How all the poor of the world, how the sinners can be redeemed. How His glory must remain forever. How every prayer we offer must go through His name, for He is the link, the ladder between earth and heaven. How He will feed the nations of the world from a few small corn seeds planted on the mountain that will grow like great cedars in Lebanon, and that will shake, and the city shall be filled with fullness through the glory and through the power of what came about from this day.

We all must acknowledge the great spiritual blessings that we have received through the birth of Christ. Have we ever considered as the Psalmist, King David wrote, the natural blessings also. Remember our Lord when He ascended to His Father He said to His apostles – All power is given unto me both in heaven and on earth. Once again that word all. This was the Son of God who was now receiving this from His Father. If we follow the Scriptures we will find that this power was to be dispensed thorough the power of the Holy Spirit which was sent also as a gift to mankind.

We can read in the Scriptures how the prophets foretold that there would be a former outpouring of this spirit and a latter

day outpouring. We know that latter day outpouring began in the 1800s when the fullness of the Spirit of God was once again poured out on all mankind. Once again that word all. 'Your young men shall see dreams, and your old men visions.' We see in the world from that period on how the Spirit of God has worked through Christ's sending and through Christ's knowledge, how it has worked through the mind of man and how advancements have been made in all the ways of living, how those things that were previously a worry to mankind, the plagues of this world, how the means were found to immunise against them. This was the power of God, not the mind of man. How crops which only yielded certain quantities have now been like those few pieces of corn planted in Lebanon, and through science and through the wisdom of God crops have been able to be multiplied and bring forth much food so that the cities of the world that are not capable of growing anything can flourish. These are the natural blessings that we have received thorough the sending of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ's birth to begin a new way into the world. These are the things that we should stand in awe of.

That is why we have been urged by that same Holy Spirit to confess with our mouths that Jesus Christ is the founder of our faith. Never let anything else take the place of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As we leave on this day, we leave also with memories and thanksgiving and the peace of our Lord in our hearts. The children aptly sang last night a hymn in their service that said the children all around the world in no matter what nation they are, they see this birth. Those in the countries where their skin is white, they

see this child as a white child. Those where the skin is light brown, they see it as light brown. Those where it is dark brown, those that it is black, they all see the birth of Christ, and through their eyes as a means of God giving to Christ the Gentile and the heathen nations of the world. For those of us who have been fortunate enough to travel in those countries, you do not even notice the colour of skin when the worship of Christ is taking place. Christ has indeed asked His Father, Christ is indeed dispensing His blessings everywhere into the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. We should play our part at helping all of those who need this comfort, this uplift, this same peace that we have achieved, so that Christ can indeed as the Psalmist said – Every nation shall give glory only unto His great and holy name.

It is a wonderful time for us. Recently in a service we have been reminded in the Pastoral a prophecy came, and that prophecy said that the Lord God looked down and He saw the labour of our hands and it pleased Him, for He had blessed that labour, but He urged us to all walk in the light of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, make Christ the light of our life, walk in that light, and bring forth the spiritual fruits, not only the natural fruits, but the spiritual fruits of love, joy, peace, understanding, compassion and all of those that are listed in the Scripture. His promise to us through that prophecy, which has the same promise as any prophecy written in the Bible because it was borne through the Holy Spirit, His promise was that we would all receive a double blessing. Let us strive to receive that double blessing by walking in the light of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the founder of our faith. Amen.

Apostle Service
New Year
1st January 2010

Text is the Pastoral Letter for New Year 2010

When we come before the Lord on a day like today there are many thoughts in our minds, thoughts of the year gone by, and thoughts and plans for the year that stands before us. It is important that we begin in the correct way of giving thanksgiving to the Almighty God, and looking to see that He is the Creator of everything and every blessing in our life.

We can only receive blessings through the grace of Christ, and God in His love sent our Lord into the world to bring about this new way into the world, and that is why we say we begin a New Year of grace. We must treasure that grace for it is only by grace, by the grace of God, that we can achieve any thing that we plan. In all our plans we must always remember to say the words – If God is willing as we plan these things, for God knows better than any of us in this church. Often He leads us in a way that we do not understand at the time, but when we look back we can then see His wonderful loving hand.

It has always been from the beginning of time a difficult ask and a difficult way for mankind who has been given choices in life to find the right words to offer thanksgiving unto the Almighty God and to look to the future. King David also was very conscious of the fact that he should acknowledge certain things as a New Year began, and he should ask for certain things. He wrote a Psalm which is Psalm 65, and if we follow it through we would certainly all get an example of what we should be looking to in our thanksgiving and where we should be looking for the

blessings into the future, and we find written:

“Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away. Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea: Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power: Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people. They also that dwell in the uttermost part are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.”

We see in those words very clearly that our first obligation, or our first desire, or our first understanding must be that we accept the Almighty God as the Creator.

We must accept Him as the giver of all of our blessings both spiritually and naturally. 'Praise waiteth for Him,' it is said by the Psalmist. He is waiting for our praise. Today is a great opportunity where we can give Him that praise, as the Psalmist said, out of Zion, which is the church. Out of Zion this praise can go before Him and that will please Him, and allow Him to continue in giving those blessings for our infirmities, for it is said they can be purged and taken away. This wonderful gift of grace where we fail and we fall, we can have that taken away and replaced with this righteousness that was promised.

It is referred to by the Psalmist as a terrible righteousness. It is not terrible for us. It is terrible for Satan and his followers, for they have spent so much time, and often spent so much thought and planning in making God's children fall into sin, and they think they have a victory, and then by one gift, that gift of grace through repentance, that wonderful gift of peace, it becomes terrible for them because it bounces back in their face we would say, and all of that work that they have done has been for nought.

We can then benefit from this blessing. He visits the earth and brings the rain, and certainly we can all think of that in these days as we have lived through a great blessing that the Almighty God has visited the world. He has set the hills green again, the animals look and dance before Him and sing praise. The whole of the creation gives Him praise for this blessing. Do we find in our hearts sufficient to give Him praise, not only for that blessing, because He also promised that there would be a river of blessing flow through the world. This river of blessing is the grace of Christ which we

can all partake of every day of our life.

It is a wonderful time for us to consider our vows again, the Psalmist said, and make a commitment. In this commitment we wish to follow the Lord and make Him our Creator, make Him our Saviour, make Him our Redeemer, and make Him our leader through the Godhead. The Father is the Creator of all things and He continues to create. The Son is the Redeemer and continues to redeem. The Holy Spirit is our leader and continues to lead and teach us if we give ourselves unto this Trinity. What more can we expect in life than that Trinity can give unto us day by day? Of course we have to make a commitment, the Psalmist said. We have to commit our ways unto the Lord and then we will receive of these blessings.

We have heard in the Pastoral that we are in a period of time in the world where we don't have to look very hard to see so much unrighteousness, so much ungodliness, so much kicking against authority. It tells us we then see that one thing is sure as we turn into a new year, that we have gone one step closer to the return of the Lord. All of these things have been foretold. Clearly the Prophet Daniel saw this period of time in the form of the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw, in the form of the feet which are made of clay and steel, but the two cannot blend together. The clay is the will of the people and the steel is the authority, and the two do not go together. Everyone wants their rights, but nobody wants their obligations to go with these rights.

We see in the world, and we have to be careful, and we have been warned that we do not allow these things to come within our houses, for the house must be the first place of worship. We ask

ourselves – What is the cause behind all of this restlessness in the world? What is the cause, there must be one single thing? We know we could enumerate many things. We know that it is the work of Satan and his followers, but there must be a cause that is bringing this about, all of this rebellion. That cause has been researched by the crime authorities. They have found that 90 percent of crimes committed in the world that end with a breach of the commandment of God are caused by one thing, therefore let us hear from the Apostle Paul. He already in his day knew and warned the people of what things would cause this, and he wrote to the Galatians in Chapter 5 verse 13 on as follows:

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which

“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

We see the Apostle Paul says that we have been given liberty, and this liberty allows us to dictate our life. He enumerated many things that we are all aware of which can be summed up as the bad and the good. But he finally summed them all up and he gave an extra warning which is the basis of all the problems that we see in the world, and that is in verse 26:

“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.” Envy of other’s blessings, envy of other’s position in life, envy of other things that one has in their life, envy of one’s gifts that one is given from God becomes and has become envy, and through research 90 percent of crimes and breaches of commandments of God all stem from this envy.

That is why our Lord when He gave Moses the commandments, He gave that commandment that we should not envy what our neighbour has. We should not envy his wife, or his maid servant, we should not envy his cattle, we should not envy anything, because through this envy when we live in a period of time where we have this freedom, this freedom of choice in life, it leads to other

crimes. It leads to theft, it leads to drunkenness, it leads to lasciviousness, it leads to adultery, it leads to telling lies, it leads to stealing, it leads to killing, not honouring parents, and all of these things are brought about through this one thought of mind. We have to resist being envious of anyone around us. The young people, the pressure is put on them, in this day and age, to have everything that their other school friends have. Their school friends try something with drugs or something like that, and they are taunted and eventually many give in because of this envy. Envy will be the downfall of the world.

If we are to envy anything we should be in awe and wonder at the power of God, and we should come before Him, and we should ask Him to allow us to witness His power and to see His blessings, and we should always as the Apostle Paul said - In love, love thy neighbour as thyself. The most important thing that we can do in our lives is to pray for the blessings of

our neighbours that they will be blessed as we would want those blessings ourselves, to help them achieve those blessings, not be envious, but to help them no matter where they are in the world, whether they are underprivileged and they have not yet heard of this wonderful river of grace flowing through the world. We should devote our lives to asking the Almighty God to give everyone of His blessings of grace. That will be blessed.

If we pray for others we will find that we also will be blessed. The Scripture is very clear that both are blessed, the giver and the receiver. We should begin this New Year being aware and alert of that great crime that is spreading through the world, and we should teach our children and young people to be aware and be ready at all times to accept the Almighty God as the Creator, to accept Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, and to accept the Holy Spirit as our teacher in life, and then we will find contentment in this year. Amen.

CHRISTMAS

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

These words of the angels recorded in the gospel of Luke, heralded the fulfilment of that which was spoken by the Prophet Isaiah, Ch 9 v 6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

The Son of God was born Spirit first and flesh second, so that he would be able to fulfil the mission given to Him by His Father. Our Lord was born in a manger, in humbleness, showing to the world that no matter who we are we all stand equal before God. Jesus was born as we all are, naked in the sight of God, in innocence as all children are. He had before him a great labour to achieve, and with the guidance of the Almighty God, was and still is today, the most important example for the Christian world to follow.

Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, must surely be the most important gift that the world has ever received, who remains with us today through the Holy Spirit and continues to teach and prepare all those seeking souls for the Kingdom of God.

Bishop Alan Crouch