

Sermon preached at Gisborne, 27 December 2020

The Gifts Jesus offers us

The Gospel and letter of John present the WORD of God: God spoke and things happened! The WORD was with God when all things were created. The WORD was the source of Life and light. The WORD became human and lived among men. The WORD was Jesus!

Jesus does not impose salvation. He narrates it into being through intimate personal relationships, compassionate teaching, responsive prayer and sacrificial death.

John's gospel also emphasizes the gifts that Jesus offers, love being predominant over all. Love and God cannot be separated.

God loved us first and God loved all creation. Anyone who is creative, is part of and loves what they create. Anyone who can see beauty in any form delights in it ... think for a moment of a painted masterpiece, a sculpture, the piece of pottery, wonderful music, a glorious garden, a flower arrangement, carefully presented food or beautifully iced cakes! The creator finds much pleasure in what is created and pleasure joy in bringing to light and wonder to others. On the other hand the declaration or abuse of the creation causes sadness and anger. Think for a moment how God must feel about all he has created.

God's love is universal, it is steadfast it is forgiving and liberating. When we accept God's love we can grow to our full potential. When we accept Jesus, and all he represents, we must surely realize how deeply our creator loves us, how precious each of us is in his sight. God is part of us!

Knowing how much we are loved as a source of great joy. Joy enables us to forget past disappointments, sadness and pain. Joy promotes hope and leaves no room for darkness and fear. The events of the world are overcome, they fade away in that illumination of our joy. Christ is our light!

The light within us guides us to make right decisions, lead us along the narrow and danger fraught road of life and gives us the assurance to face whatever our future holds. This assurance gives us "peace of mind".

We can know God's peace and what a wonderful experience it is. we have no need to panic, no need for confrontations or shouted arguments. peace is available When we ask God to take over. peace comes in prayer, peace comes whether we're alone or in fellowship, peace comes in silence or chaos. the peace is within us where ever we are. Just be still and acknowledge it.

Many of us find peace and pleasure walking beside water. water is a living source. We enjoy swimming or bathing in it and water has been the means of trade and transport for thousands of years. How uplifting it is to walk in a summer shower or even hear the rain on the roof. We can liken "living water" to the Holy Spirit — a stream flowing through us, quenching our thirst, cleansing our bodies, giving us life. We should never allow our lives to become arid and devoid of "living water", when it is offered so freely and yes it's always "on tap".

There is an old song with the words "Everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die ..." When Christ the Love, Christ the Joy and Peace, Christ the Light and Spirit is alive in us, we do not

die. Our bodies die and for many, that is a blessed relief. However, our spirit, our very essence lives on. I believe we pass on; to those we love, those whom we have nurtured and influenced; the rich, God-given-gifts that make us who we are. We actually share these attributed long before our earth-journey is ended. We give an example, the best we can, just as Jesus did.

We can be out-reaching and good-living, we can be teachers, leaders, good parents, good friends and we have all the resources within us, when we accept and follow Jesus Christ.

Jesus called God father, we could choose the often used phrase gosh he is like his father!! I often look at my brother, who is three years older than me, and think gosh how like dad he is, not that I knew my dad when he was eighty four which my brother is now as our dad died at fifty eight, which now seems very young, however we were privileged indeed to know him as he had rheumatic fever when we were five years or three years of my age. I visited the undertaker the day before dad's funeral to say goodbye and I experienced the most amazing and wonderful and uplifting sensation when I realized that God had taken the alive part of Dad that I love - his fun loving spirit his laughter his warmth his gentleness everything we loved had gone from his tired body. What we love and admire in others we emulate. Our parents, siblings, relations and others are our role models just as Jesus was and is for his followers. We imitate and learn from them unconsciously pick up idiosyncrasies even to voice and laughter.

The disciples followed and learned from, and lived like Jesus they accepted his gifts and continued his work just as we must.

We do not go out into the world alone nor do we go ill-equipped for the challenges ahead. So let us claim the gifts so freely given and mirror the living love that won't ever ave us.