

Sunday 16 July

Nehemiah 8:1-12 (NRSVA)

8 ¹All the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. **They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had given to Israel.** ²Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. ³He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. ⁴The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the purpose; and beside him stood those Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and those Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hash-baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. ⁵And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. ⁶Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen', lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. ⁷Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. ⁸**So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.**

⁹And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. ¹⁰Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.' ¹¹So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, 'Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.' ¹²**And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.**

Colossians 3:12-17 (NRSVA)

¹²As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord^[a] has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶**Let the word of Christ (God or Lord) dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God (the Lord).** ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Footnotes:

- a. [Colossians 3:13](#) Other ancient authorities read *just as Christ*
- b. [Colossians 3:16](#) Other ancient authorities read *of God, or of the Lord*
- c. [Colossians 3:16](#) Other ancient authorities read *to the Lord*

Matthew 24:30-35 (NRSVA)

The Coming of the Son of Man...

³⁰Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven" with power and great glory. ³¹And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

³²From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁴Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³⁵**Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.**

BIBLE SUNDAY - 16 July 2017 - Terry Alve

In a month (Sun 20 August) Allan Davidson (past warden in Tawa and worshipper at St Christopher's) will be with us to formally speak on Behalf of the Bible Society, for which he is the Church engagement officer. In that service he will refer to the Parable of the Sower as he speaks of the work and mission of the Society..

New Zealand's favourite Bible verse in 2016 was Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."

Do you have a favourite Scripture and if so what is it?

Today's Old Testament lesson - Nehemiah 8 - talks of a time when the Scriptures **were rediscovered with rejoicing, and allowed again to guide the people.**

Nehemiah 8:1-12 (NRSVA)

¹ All the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had given to Israel.

Nehemiah had returned from Exile around 445BC from the Persian King to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Despite opposition esp. Sanballat & Tobiah and Leaders of the Jews who were extorting the workers, he organised the people and rebuilt the walls in 52 days! Those around were very aware that the hand of God was with them. But the rebuilding did not stop there. Neh. 8 and onwards then talks about the religious forms that proceed culminating in the revival and renewal of faith. This proceeded both from the encouragement of having a godly leader amongst them and a recovery of the word of God of which we read in Ch.8.

⁷ Levites helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. ⁸ **So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.**

⁹ And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.

¹¹ So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, 'Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.' ¹² **And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing,**

because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

The thing that intrigues me is the ebb and flow there is in people's responses to the Scriptures. Witness the Hebrews...

This year marks 500 years since the Reformation which coincided with the arrival of the printing press and more people having the scriptures in their hands. Martin Luther was the catalyst for an incredible reform which flowed from a recognition that the Church was getting wrong by not centering on the Word of God esp. the sale of indulgences....

At the macro and the micro level, wherever the Church and Christians depart from Biblical principles, heresy and ultimately lovelessness results.

A family story about a growing, impoverished immigrant German family in the Wairarapa...

In our own day I am encouraged that the debate in the Church about the Way Forward for the Church's relationship with those seeking same sex marriage, while difficult, has been a blessing. It has forced many back to re-examine the Scriptures, and ultimately to what love demands and in particular whether we have missed anything....

As I reflect on my own relationship with the Bible, I am aware of a number of things:

1. True conversion to Christ will always be based on scripture thirst and understanding. I am ever grateful that I had 2 godly Bible teacher as I came to faith in 1975 ... Roger Thompson & Dick Tripp
2. Understanding the Bible can be problematic.
Bible Society Blog refers to Bp Ellie's conversion,
"Lots of the passages in the Bible confused me (and still do!), but through wrestling with them and reading more and more, I definitely found a strong chord of understanding that was a huge part of being drawn closer to making the decision to follow Jesus."
Very much my experience as a new Christian at age 23...
She talks about her difficulty in giving her first Bible away to a seeker; it had become so precious to her!
3. Greatly benefitted from going to Bible College and learning much about the contextual setting of scripture... eg. the background to Nehemiah and how it speaks of a pattern for Godly leadership...

4. I continue to learn the importance of allowing the word of God to speak to me personally... meditatively, listening...to my heart - not easy for an engineer?
5. Especially and essentially, the Bible is God's love letter to me that will God will always use to encourage me and stir me up with challenge and examination of conscience.

Colossians 3

¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. **¹⁶Let the word of Christ (God or Lord) dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God (the Lord).** ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Note 3:16 NT scriptures. Always been intrigued about how well they sum up the NT message as a whole... **see highlighted examples.**

Finally!

Matthew 24 concluded

³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

In this passage about the return of Christ and the end of the age, we are reminded that the word of God remains ... it will not pass away. We deal with an unchangeable God; is there anything as we read God's word, that needs to change in us? Is there an attitude, a belief, a practice, a sin, a relationship, a habit... that needs attention? Let us not neglect our faith and the study of Scripture that will always enhance it.

CHAPTER 3 VERSE 16 IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (NRSVA)

Matthew 3:16

And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

Mark 3:16

So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter);

Luke 3:16

John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'

John 3:16

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.'

Acts 3:16

And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

Romans 3:16

ruin and misery are in their paths,

1 Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

2 Corinthians 3:16

but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

Galatians 3:16

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring; it does not say, 'And to offsprings', as of many; but it says, 'And to your offspring', that is, to one person, who is Christ.

Ephesians 3:16

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit,

Philippians 3:16

Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with all of you.

1 Timothy 3:16

Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great:
He was revealed in flesh,
vindicated in spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among Gentiles,
believed in throughout the world,
taken up in glory.

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

Hebrews 3:16

Now who were they who heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses?

James 3:16

For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.

1 Peter 3:16

yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame.

2 Peter 3:16

speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.

1 John 3:16

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.

Revelation 3:16

So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.