Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Walking with God – Week 34

What supports us?

Day 232. How do I know what's right?

So you've said I should pray.

Yes. I would encourage you to actually pray all the time. Have an ongoing conversation with God. Share with Him everything that's going through your mind, everything that you're encountering in life.

Umm… what's to stop me from going crazy? If I'm so much into my mind, how do I know what is right and what isn't? I've heard of people who thought they were hearing from God when they were really quite sick mentally. What's to stop that?

Great question. 1st, compare what you are "hearing" from God with what Jesus teaches – what the Bible teaches generally (beware of specifics as you can find specifics in the bible to support almost anything). 2nd, learn from your fellow journey-ers – they can let you know if what you are thinking makes sense to them as well. Don't learn just from the journey-ers of today, but also going back through history. People today can get caught in fads and fashions, you temper that with what the church has taught since the time of Christ. 3rd, reason it out – does this make sense? Would God, who created people for shalom, really want you to do this? By looking at scripture, tradition, and reason, you can safely figure things out.

Have you "heard" things from God which you thought, "Hmmm… this is quite strange …."? How does referring to scripture, tradition, and reason help guide you? Are there points it is missing in guiding you?

Share your answer with others whom you trust.

Day 233: What's in the Bible generally

So, what does the Bible "say" generally?

Matthew 22:

Jesus was asked, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him, "'*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*.' This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it: '*Love your neighbor as yourself*.' All the law and the prophets (i.e., the rest of the bible) hang on these two commandments."

How do we love God and love our neighbour?

Psalm 34:

Come children. Listen to me.
I will teach you what it means to fear the Lord.
Do you want to really live?
Would you love to live a long, happy life?
Then do not speak evil or deception.
Turn away from evil and do good.
Seek shalom and pursue it.

What if we make a mistake?

Psalm 32:

How blessed is the one whose crimes are forgiven, whose sin is pardoned.
How blessed is the one to whom the Lord does not assign wrongdoing, in who there is no deceit.

So if we do good and seek health, wholeness, completeness, etc. with intentful integrity, our words and actions in sync, that is loving God and loving our neighbour? And if we do wrong, God knows our true intentions and forgives us?

That's it in a nutshell. God says "I'll know how much you love Me by the love you show your neighbour."

As Jesus put it, "I give you a new commandment—to love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples—if you have love for one another." (John 13)

As one of Jesus' disciples wrote (1 John 3 and 4):

For this is the gospel message that you have heard from the beginning: that we should love one another …. Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been fathered by God and knows God. The person who does not love does not know

God … By this the love of God is revealed in us: that God has sent his one and only Son into the world so that we may live through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends, if God so loved us, then we also ought to love one another. If we love one another, God resides in us …

That sounds too simple.

To successfully love, in all circumstances to all people, takes discipline, perseverance, fortitude, courage, discernment. It may sound simple, but it's not easy.

How can you love better?

Share what you feel open to, without betraying any confidences.

Day 234: Why all the fluff?

If it's as straightforward as you said yesterday, why all the fluff then?

What fluff?

The institutional church. Weekly worship services. Altar hangings. Candles. Fancy buildings. Bishops, Priests, Deacons, etc.

A priest went to visit one of his parishioners who had decided not to come to church. He was welcomed into the house, and told, "Reverend, I just don't see the use of going to church anymore. It doesn't do me any good – if anything, it gets my blood pressure up or bores me to tears, neither which can be good."

The priest sat down by the fire. He carefully lifted one of the logs out, and put it away from the others. "Watch that log" he said.

They both sat and stared at the log. While the fire continued burning with the other logs, the one log went out.

Saying, "I'll pray for you", the priest stood up and left.

The parishioner was back in church the next day.

I don't get it.

The letters to the Hebrews states, "let us draw near with a sincere heart in the assurance that faith brings … And let us hold unwaveringly to the hope that we confess, … And let us take thought of how to spur one another on to love and good works, not abandoning our own meetings, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other,…"

The weekly worship isn't for God – it's for us. It's to keep the fire burning. The teaching, the pastoral care, the dedicated people, the fancy buildings, the ongoing and growing tradition – it's all for us, to keep the fire burning. Its to keep knowledge of our faith alive, generation by generation, person by person. It passes on the necessity of loving, and has for the past 2,000 years.

Did your attending church this past Sunday help you to love? Help someone else? Why or why not?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 235: Reason

So I go to the bible for guidance, and I go to the church for guidance – and I go to myself? What is this bit about "reason"? What if I can't "reason" things out?

It's a three-legged stool, and no leg is longer than the other – they all support each other. As you are praying unceasingly (I hope), you are conversing with God – and God, whether or not you realize it, is conversing with you. Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever -- the Spirit of truth … He resides with you and will be in you…. when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on his own authority, but will speak whatever He hears and will tell you what is to come. 14 He will glorify me because He will receive from Me what is Mine and will tell it to you." (John 14 and 16)

Sometimes, the hardest thing can be to figure out "what is the most loving thing to do here?" Our aids are scripture, the church and its traditional teachings, and what God and us reason out together. All three should be in sync, else we may need to wrestle some more.

But some people can reason things out a lot better than others.

Yes. And some understand the bible better, and some know the church traditions better. This is why we depend on each other – it's why the church is a body, not an individual.

Do you find it hard to reason out the most loving thing at time? Give an example as appropriate.

Share when you didn't pray because you didn't feel worthy.

Day 236: Working together

Hold on, I've caught you – yesterday you said the church is not an individual. Yet, on day 192, you said that once I was baptised, I AM the church.

Yes. Both are true.

How can that be?

You are the church, yet you are not the church alone. You are the church, yet you are not the church complete. You are the church in its fullness – yet you are not the full church.

You're getting confusing again…

The Apostle Paul wrote, "For just as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body—though many—are one body, so too is Christ. In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. If the foot says, "Since I am not a hand, I am not part of the body," it does not lose its membership in the body because of that. And if the ear says, "Since I am not an eye, I am not part of the body," it does not lose its membership in the body because of that. If the whole body were an eye, what part would do the hearing? If the whole were an ear, what part would exercise the sense of smell? But as a matter of fact, God has placed each of the members in the body just as He decided. If they were all the same member, where would the body be? So now there are many members, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor in turn can the head say to the foot, "I do not need you." On the contrary, those members that seem to be weaker are essential, … so that there may be no division in the body, but the members may have mutual concern for one another. If one member suffers, everyone suffers with it. If a member is honored, all rejoice with it."

You are the church, a very special, unique, and needed part of it. You work in conjunction with all the other needed parts, each unique to the purpose which God has given us. You are the church, filled with God's mission to transform humanity. We are the church, filled with God's mission to transform humanity – and we can help each other out to pursue the will of God in this.

Describe how you fulfill being the church as your individual self, and how you depend on the greater church to fulfill God's mission.

Share as you feel led.

Day 237: Union

You are Christ, we are Christ, Christ is Christ.

What????

Christ: synonym of Messiah. Meaning: "Anointed One." Anointed to unify all people as the New Temple to usher in the new age of universal shalom.

I'm not the Christ.

Not THE Christ, but Christ.

Here we go again … ok, explain please …

a.) Jesus the Christ came as God Incarnate to teach and demonstrate God's Kingdom of Shalom. In His death and resurrection, He opened the gates of the Kingdom to all believers.

Got that.

b.) He anointed His apprentices to follow in His footsteps and do what He did. In fact, He told them, "you will do greater things than I". Out of His apprentices came the church, His anointed body, anointed to do His work in conjunction with His Holy Spirit.

I see where you're headed here I think …

c.) You are part of the body of Christ, the church. You are the church, in a unique and individual expression. You are anointed to continue Jesus' mission of teaching and demonstrating the Kingdom of God, the Country of Shalom.

Ok, but I don't WANT to be "Christ." I can't handle that.

You are Christ, we are Christ, Christ is Christ.

Describe how this makes you feel.

Share your feelings with others whom you trust.

Day 238: Rest.

The life of a Christian can be intense. To keep healthy, it is important to rest, receive nourishment, feeding both body and soul. Take this day to reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you.