



Waterrow Worship 25 October 2009

"may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight"

Psalm 19 written by David sets out how God's creation and his whole world really reveal his greatness. It is a description of God's law and what it means to us. It is also clear however how different God's law is to what we think of as the law.

When we think of the law we often think about something stopping us from having fun. But here we see something completely different ***"The Law of the Lord is perfect!"*** This law revives us, makes us wise, gives us joy to the heart, gives light to the eyes, warns us and rewards us. What is really set out here are guidelines for life guidelines for how we should behave to follow God's vision for us. They also set out how we should behave by following the example of how Jesus lived and acted. They set out a path to righteousness rather than being overly prescriptive and full of rules about what you can't do.

When raising children it is all about positive psychology if you tell a child what they cannot do they will do it. If you tell them what they can do and then by the way don't touch the hob then they will thrive in it. That is what is being said here we are being treated as the children of God and given direction in what we do. The rules are not chains on our hands and feet they point out danger and warn us then point out success and guide us on the right path.

We need to live as Jesus did be contrite and caring but above all lead by example.

Some Christians really struggle with guilt, they worry they have committed a sin trying to do something good but with selfish intentions or failed to put their whole heart into a task. That really is one of the differences between God's Law and the Law of the land Gods law is more about encouraging a mindset where we are all good people and act the right way.

We don't need overly prescriptive rules telling us not to do something. We don't do it as we know that it is wrong.

I know I have broken the speed limit as the light flashes at me when I drive into Waterrow. The law is 30, no more or no less, but God's way of doing things is different we are encouraged to use judgment and consideration I



think God would say be safe and careful with consideration about what other people think and how it affects them. That, in my view is what sets Christians apart, they are of a different mindset and feel responsible for their action following God's law and examples for living.

A couple of Sundays ago I was listening to Premier Christian Radio, which isn't something I often do but on this day I was and what I heard really made me think. The DJ played an extract from the Tory Party conference. He didn't play the leaders spin or propaganda he played an extract from the introduction the chairman gave for a Christian Conservative Group who were based in the lobby.

He introduced the section saying that many people didn't see link between Church and Politics but fortunately he did. He then went onto set out how people used God's rules to guide them on the way that they did things, especially in politics. It was by far the most passionate and compelling talk I have ever heard listening to one of these events and it did leave a lasting impression. His closing point, however, was very important and was about the way that Christians really stand out from the crowd in what they do.

By their very actions they show who they are and what they believe in. He pointed out, for the main, who the community leaders are, who runs the parish council, who is it who leads the children's groups and who drive the community. It is the people of God who following God's Laws live out their lives the way that God wants us to. They lead us by example to a better place and guide us to do better things. They tell us to be part of a wider community and care for each other and above all tell us to make a difference.

If people see us making a difference and being shining lights they may well wish to join us which is the very best way to preach God's message.

The New Testament reading also has the same message about Gods Laws. Timothy is really struggling with his faith he is surrounded by false teachers and the inevitable pressure of a growing ministry. He could easily abandon his faith or modify his doctrine. How many young and inspiring church leaders go into a new community with great ideas and enthusiasm before being worn down or indoctrinated with cynicism?



I read somewhere that the greatest growth in church congregations is between the 3rd and 7th years of an incumbents' tenure. This is exactly what is happening to Timothy he is forgetting about the first rules and principles. Paul needs to take him to one side and council him to look at his past and to hold to the basic teachings of Jesus.

We are constantly surrounded by false teachings and we must not allow our society to crowd out God's eternal truth. In my own personal work environment I am often asked to compromise my values by unscrupulous clients who want me to lie or misconceive the truth. It is a struggle and I often have to rethink how I can act in their best interests without sacrificing my own moral beliefs or my professional integrity whilst still following God's Laws.

Paul also reminds Timothy where he learned his beliefs and values **"and from infancy you have know the scriptures"** Timothy was one of the first *second* generation Christians he became a Christian not because an evangelist preached a powerful sermon but because his mother and grandmother taught him the Holy Scriptures when he was a child. This demonstrates the importance, at this stage in the life of the church, of parents work. In home and in church everybody needs to realise that teaching small children is an opportunity and a responsibility. It is the start of something big that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

But we don't all have the benefits of knowing God and his teachings from an early age. Our society in some sectors has become so removed from Church as a basic culture that for a lot of people the principles are completely alien to them. Judith was amazed when one of her friends a young Mum somebody you would have to describe as middle class, well educated, a member of the green party, and pretty well off actually had to ask when they were planning an Easter Egg hunt what Easter was about.

We as today's Christians are just like Timothy – there are people out there who no nothing and need our support we need to evangelise and the best way to do it is just to be true to God's law and his light will shine through us.



I want to finish by telling you a positive story of my own. You may have noticed that we have two children and we try to take our responsibility as Christian parents very seriously. We don't preach the Gospel to Nathan so perhaps aren't quite as good as Timothy's parents but we do pray with him every night from a prayer book. However the last few weeks he's decided he wants to do his own prayer. The other day his prayer was very simple "**he wanted to pray for a boy at school because he had hit him and that was wrong**". We hope that is the start of Nathan following in Jesus' way and following Gods laws. Hopefully he, as the next generation, will continue to make the world a better and more peaceful place to live in and be in.

Amen

Alan Swan
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