

Sermon Thursday 16th May 2013

Psalm 32 and Mark 8:31 – 38

How many of us are truly happy with our lot? Does this happiness disappear or vary as to how we feel or when we think we are right and everyone else is wrong?

I know from personal experience that it is possible to not feel totally happy all the time yet in today's Psalm we have the formula to ensure that we can be truly happy when we ask forgiveness from God which then in turn brings true joy or happiness.

The Psalm is described as a 'maskil', which in Hebrew, is a term denoting psalms written to make a person wise or prudent or to increase a person's success or skill. The Psalm is attributed to David who as we know from the Old Testament could sometimes be unwise and imprudent in his dealings both with people and God yet he always seeks forgiveness when God appears to abandon him to his enemies.

The Psalm is about the true joy of receiving God's forgiveness for our sins when we turn to Him and confess where we have gone wrong. In Verse 5 the writer writes 'Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave the guilt of my sin.'

In seeking God's forgiveness we must be totally truthful and open about where we have gone wrong, what we may have said or thought, when we have done something we know is wrong or failed to do something and seek forgiveness from God and to seek Gods help in not doing it again or even thinking about doing it

again. God wants to forgive us our sins. How many times in the New Testament do we hear Christ say to people go your sins are forgiven. By faith in God and Christ we experience forgiveness for our sins. In Roman's 4: 7/8 Paul writes: **'Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.'** This is the true state we should strive to be in all the time; a oneness with a truly loving God and His Son Jesus Christ in all we do or say.

But we can be stubborn like the mule in verse 9 of the Psalm and refuse to seek forgiveness and follow God and let Him guide us through all our life whatever that may throw at us. God wants to forgive us in love but our own stubborn nature can I know from experience stops this forgiveness and has plunged my life into unhappiness on occasions. This is God punishing and disciplining; harsh maybe but when we ignore God and the teachings of Jesus we put ourselves outside His love and it is only when we acknowledge this through confession that God forgives us in love. That is the disciplining of God as I see it so that when I admit my stubbornness or wrongs I return to God's love.

We as a Church have embarked upon a prayer programme seeking Gods will and guidance for the future. We have been blessed by God mightily in the past but now we need to stop marking time or put another way stop being complacent and move on as a Church and as individuals. At the heart of this I believe is firstly to seek forgiveness as to where we may have gone wrong and to say sorry for becoming complacent both as a church and in our individual Christian lives and then ask God to guide us as to where He wants us to go as a Church and as individuals serving Him and others.

In the Gospel stubborn Peter tried to rebuke Jesus when Jesus predicted his death; look at verse 33 harsh words. Peter wanted to protect Jesus and keep him for himself and the disciples but Jesus knew he had to fulfil his ministry. They did this out of love for Jesus not in any evil way. Their role and ours now is to follow the teachings of Christ and His Father in all we do as individuals and as a Church.

Through true forgiveness we receive true joy. So I urge you do not be stubborn. Always seek God's forgiveness in your daily prayer life; pray to let Him into your life and the life of the Church and to follow the teachings of His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. By doing this you, me and the Church will be blessed by God. Amen