

Talk For October 24th. Bible Sunday

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen.

Today, is Bible Sunday, But surely every Sunday is Bible Sunday as we have one or more passages read from the Bible, ever Sunday ,so why have a special Sunday ? Well, I suppose it gives us a chance to think about this mighty book and the power it has and to thank God for its content. Like all well-conceived writing it contains the power to change our lives if we want it to. But we should also consider the people who wrote its contents, both Old and New testament. ----The word Testament means *something that serves as a sign or evidence of a specified fact, event, or quality*

The Bible certainly fulfils that meaning. It bears witness to the presence of God in the world for thousands of years, and the extraordinary mission of his son and the affect he had on so many people.

I suppose we could divide the Bible into three parts, not two- The first part, Old Testament, the story of God and the history of the Jewish nation and their turbulent relationship with God. The second being the four Gospels of the New Testament which is the life of Jesus, his ministry, his teaching and this forms the basis of our Christian faith. Finally, the section from Acts of the Apostles through to Revelations which is the story of the development of the early Christian Church up the end of the 1st century and includes the Epistles. But it does not end there- the writing carries on from the early Church writers of the 2nd Century up to today. No other faith, no secular activity has had such a long influence on Civilization. –

Originally, the earliest Scriptures were handed down from generation to generation orally, nothing written down until the book of Job, considered to be the oldest book of the Bible, and written in around BC2000. The stone tablets of the Ten Commandments were given

to Moses at Mount Sinai and later stored in the Ark of the Covenant about 500 years later and then between BC 1400–400 -the manuscripts comprising the original Hebrew Bible of 39 Old Testament books were completed and kept in the tabernacle and later in the Temple beside the Ark of the Covenant. The Old Testament was later translated from Hebrew to Greek making it accessible to non-Jewish people. Between 45 -100 AD the New Testament books were written.

This adds up to the fact that the Bible contains 66 books and was written by more than 40 authors over a period of roughly 1,500 years. Now to me that is incredible. Every year, the Holy Bible sells over 100 million copies. Non-profit organizations give out free Bibles all over the world. And the Bible has been translated to over 690 languages from the original Hebrew .. The average Bible has 1,200 pages.

But what about you and your Bible? I wonder how many copies you have- I have about a dozen different English translations of the bible including , what is known as a RED LETTER , New Testament so called because all the words spoken by Jesus are in red. The Old Testament is written primarily in Hebrew. However, the gospels were written in Greek. The Bible has been translated many times from its original languages and this has led to some interesting mis-translations or misspellings especially of the King James version which many of us would have read when we were children , until the New English Bible was printed in 1970's and then the Good News Bible. But what is often forgotten is the dedication and hard work of those early scribes working for hours on end painstakingly coping down the oral history of God's relationship with his people.

The beautifully illustrated work of the early manuscripts produced by the monks, are real labours of love and devotion to God. We have access to many ways of recording incidents and conversation now, but

then it was laborious, and slow, and if you made a mistake you had to start again as there was no tippex ,or spell checks or all the ways we have today. Without these early scribes we would not have much idea of God, Jesus, the prophets, no psalms; no guide book for our way of life. That is why this one day of the year we should give thanks for all the people over the centuries who have worked so hard to make sure we have access to God's message, and his plans for us.

But what is that message and how do we know when we find it.? God's love is the most important message of the entire Bible, and God's love is the central message of the prophets. Throughout the Old Testament God's people ask him a lot of questions. And behind each one they are wondering, "How have you loved us? "They do not understand that his love is in the *Law* given to Moses, the Ten Commandments as we know them. The Old Testament is the record of God's actions in helping his people throughout their history, beginning with the creation, through slavery and liberation and the Prophets chosen by God to interpret his words for the people. It is the background of our Christian faith which developed from the Jews. Some Christians do not realise that Jesus was Jewish, so were, Peter, the disciples, and Paul was a Jewish convert. We do not have a faith that stands alone from that of the Jewish faith.

The New Testament is an account of the fulfilment of Old Testament Law through Jesus in his teaching, his miracles, his crucifixion, and resurrection., whilst offering us the way of salvation and encouragement for daily life. In the letters of Paul, Peter, etc, we are given additional teachings from Jesus' followers, emphasising the spiritually given, Word of God and how it applies to our lives and reaffirming Jesus's message of a place in heaven for all who believe.

But it is not enough just to read the Bible, that doesn't make you a Christian, no more than reading a Mary Berry cook book makes you a good cook. It is understanding of the message that is coming from the text; and relating it to the teaching of Jesus

In our gospel reading from John, Jesus tells the Jews in no uncertain terms how wrong they are in how they read the scriptures. ***'You have your heads in your Bibles constantly because you think you'll find eternal life there. But you miss the forest for the trees. These Scriptures are all about me! And here I am, standing right before you, and you aren't willing to receive from me the life you say you want. If you believed, really believed, what Moses said, you would believe me. He wrote of me. If you won't take seriously what he wrote, how can I expect you to take seriously what I speak?'***

It is practicing the commandments of love of God and of each other; of caring for each other as Jesus cared. It is not about picking out the bits we think are ok it is all of it, the good, the bad, the easy and hard .God did not promise the Jews an easy passage through life, however they managed to make it even harder. Not that being a Christian is easy, and Jesus never said it would be but that our reward is everlasting life. **And that is one truly amazing reward!** And for those who still are not fully willing to accept that Jesus is the Son of God then he tells the Jews and tells us

'But the witness that really confirms me far exceeds John's witness. It's the work the father gave me to complete. These very tasks, as I go about completing them, confirm that the father, in fact, sent me.'

Only the Son of God was able to carry out the ministry he had or be prepared to sacrifice his life for us on the cross.

By reading the Bible regularly and asking God for understanding, we can achieve this. And if you read the Bible, you will find that God's strongest messages, often come in the moments of quietness.

The chorus of this familiar is a reminder

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, With cords that cannot be broken, Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, Lord, Bind us together in love. Heavenly Father bind us together with your words of love we find in the Bible , Amen

