John 6: 51-58

Ephesians 5:15-20

**Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Amen**

The more I live, the more I learn. The more I learn, the more I realise, the less I know. Michel Legrand

The John reading can make me feel like that. Is this true of us and our Christian faith? If so, then I suspect that we are in good company. So what do our readings help us with today?

1. We need to keep Jesus at the centre

Martin talked about our reading from John 6 last week. For me the reading is saying is “keep Jesus at the centre of everything that you do”. Jesus has paid the price of our sin with His life, if we share in His death we will also share in His eternal life. We remember the sacrifice that Jesus made each time we come to a communion service.

When we come to communion we remember the price that Jesus paid so that we can have a relationship with God. John had already written his now famous chapter 3 verse 16, I won’t ask you to quote it from memory! It says “for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”. This verse is quoted regularly as a summary of the gospel. It is easy to forget the enormity of the sacrifice God made so that we can “have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

In John 6 the crowds were starting to follow Jesus around. There was something about Jesus that grabbed their attention, yes, he had fed them, but was there more to this man Jesus? They then ask Jesus in verse 28 “what must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answers, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent”. The Message translation puts it like this: “Throw your lot in with the One that God has sent. That kind of a commitment gets you in on God’s works”.

We should remember the price that Jesus paid because:

1. If we are going to throw our lot in with Jesus we need to have an appreciation of who Jesus was and is.

If we are going to “throw our lot in with the One that God has sent” then we need to be prepared for the challenge, it is a journey that we take, primarily with Jesus, but also with others who are also making that journey. Jesus says “That kind of commitment gets you in on God’s works” but if we are going to be in on God’s works what does that mean for us?

1. We need to live our lives as those who follow Jesus.

Our Ephesians reading gives us some clues as to how we do this, together they give us a picture of the life that we should aspire to.

* We need to live as wise people – well that’s me out of it! Except that 1 Corinthians 1:27 says “But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise”. So now I am back in!
* Making the most of every opportunity – I don’t know about you but I can honestly say that I have not made the most of every opportunity in my life. But God is a gracious God. 1 John 1:9 says “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Each time we say the Lord’s prayer we say “and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us”. We make mistakes but God has provided a way back. If we have such a gracious God then surely we can try harder to make the most of the opportunities that God gives us each day?
* Understand what the Lord’s will is – I have been very slow in this. God called me to serve Him full time as a teenager, and I followed His lead until my divorce got in the way. It has taken time to get back on track, although God has taught me and refined me in the process, but training as a reader is testament to God’s patience with us, it is never too late! God may not be calling you to such a big commitment, for which I continue to ask for your prayers, but what is He calling you to do today, or this week? Is it that phone call that you should make, that visit to someone, or is it to spend more time with Him so that he can teach you gently?
* Be filled with the Spirit –

Galatians 5:22 says “but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The Message puts it like this: But what happens when we live God’s way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard – things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. That word wisely again!

* Always give thanks to God the Father for everything – that seems easy when things are going well but when things are not going well it is hard to thank God. There is a saying that when the going gets tough the tough get going. I have seen children’s T shirts which say “when the going gets tough we go to Grandmas”. I am sure we would all say that when the going gets tough it is not always the case that the tough get going – and we are not all tough. But that is where the church family is here to help, we have stand-in “grandmas” and others to support you when things are not going well. We all have difficult times, no-one is exempt. Sometimes God gives us a clue that things are not going well for someone or people can sense when things are wrong but, on the whole, people are not blessed with mind reading capabilities, so if you are struggling take time to share your challenges with others in the church and ask for prayer so that together you can thank God for the situation and maybe ask for a blessing.

So this week:

* Remember what God has done for us in sending His son Jesus and keep Jesus at the centre of your life
* Be prepared to go on a journey to find out more about Jesus, ask questions, even if it sometimes feels like the more we find out, the less we know. Maybe God is asking you to do the J John Natural Evangelism Course. Go online and find out more.
* Live as God intends us to live, wisely, making the most of every opportunity, taking time to understand God’s will for our lives and giving thanks to God for all things.

Amen.