



Which direction are you going?

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Which direction are you going? Which way are you heading in your life?

It seems good to ponder on this as sometimes we hear people ask, 'Do you have any direction in life?'

For many people whether they are Christian people or are yet still to hear the word of Jesus, the question remains, do you have any direction or do you sometimes feel you are tossed around like you are in a boat on the sea? Are you waiting for direction – a wonderful epiphany in your life to start living it or perhaps you are living life but going the wrong way?

Recently it was heard that a pastor said that only a third of his previous members have returned since the closing of worship services due to COVID – yes this is in our Lutheran Church right here in Queensland. There are many stories like that in our Lutheran Church worldwide as well as in many other denominations. Is God shaking us up to stop us in our tracks and to call us

to think again deeply on His word and to do His work – that is to believe in the one He sent Jesus?

So why are so many of us worried about people not returning to church? Is it that we might not be able to function without finances and have to shut down? Or is it because we know the truth, the truth that sets you and I free and we want to more than share it with others who are not attending but share this truth of God in Jesus with the whole world? Are our eyes being opened up more and more to the needs of those around and more importantly are our eyes being opened to see where we place our trust? Are we confident in the fact that people will just come back to church and confident

in our fleshly plans and programs or are we confident in the truth, Jesus Himself?

I don't worry about numbers at church after all God will take care of that in our faithful walk as a congregation with Him, but I care about relationships. Relationships in Jesus with people who come to the house of God, to the divine service as well as those who cannot or will not come. Those relationships are because God calls us into them to be as Christ to each other.

Last week we meditated on simple acts of God's mission – His love Jesus lived out in the world - you know where love comes to life stuff – this is through relationships where people meet Jesus. You know many

people don't come to worship if you invite them because they want to know Jesus better – rather they come because you ask them simply because you have built a God's love living in you to them relationship.

So let us clear up something however. So in church circles we worry a lot about getting people to church, but why? Why do we want people to come here? Why do you come?

Have you come to meet Jesus again in His word? Have you come desiring to know Him more and more? Have you come to sit at His feet as He ministers to you - healing you from the depths of your soul outwards? Have you come to taste God's love in bread and wine -

where you meet Jesus and as He says to you rest my child your sins are forgiven. Take and eat this is my body given up for you, take and drink this is my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins? Have you come to hear that you are His bought by His blood and that you are loved, you are being recreated and made new right now as you hear Jesus words?

When it comes to direction coming to church does not get you to heaven. You come to worship because it is where God comes to you. God comes to you always in His word – so at home or at work or in the car or wherever you are Jesus is with you and in you by faith and as you read or meditate on His word He is with you, as you pray He is with you this is living a life in

Jesus but it is here in worship that we also know that God comes to us in word and bread and wine and last week we saw in the waters of baptism.

So speaking of direction you don't have to try to get up to heaven, for heaven God Himself came to you in the baby Jesus and God in the baby Jesus keeps coming to you in worship and in your daily life through His spirit by His word – that word that now lives in you because you have been given God's spirit.

Is your confidence for eternity based on the things you do and achieve in other words are you confident in your flesh as a Christian? Are you righteous because you live a good life or boast of the things you do as a Christian or

is the righteous you have found in Jesus your saviour living in you?

Saint Paul knew of His achievements as a human about the law of God, 'If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.'

Confident man don't you think? Are you confident in where you are at as a Christian? With the things you do? You should be but the deeper question is where does your confidence lie? Is there self-righteousness in your

life or are you wrapped in the righteousness of God because you believe in Him?

Saint Paul continues, 'But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, (this is the only time in the New Testament where this word is used - the word for human waste that people would have seen in the streets as the sewerage systems in Jesus day was not like it is today), that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith

in Christ (or the faithfulness of Christ)—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

Now again why have you come today? Why do you want others to come to worship with you? Is it to share the confidence you have, not in your own works and words and effort, but in the works and word of Jesus who is faithful, obedient to death on the cross in the face of great suffering, out of love for His father and His father's love for the world to save you and me from our sins?

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings,

becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. **But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,** I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

So the direction is forward in life, boldly forward in the living Jesus living in you. By His spirit be bold and

confident in Jesus and His promise to be with you always.

We will be tempted to go backwards to what we used to live for, self but we know that to hold onto the past is loss. To go back to sin is loss. You are free in Jesus. Why not live free instead of running back to the guilt and shame of past sins - you know the ones that we tell ourselves that this is such a great failure, I am a huge mistake and failure, I shouldn't have sinned, I am so guilty - you know that little lie from the devil and our own flesh. But we don't trust in the flesh for our confidence in is Jesus who says all your sins, your shame, your guilt- everything is forgiven. You are mine.

You are Forgiven, saved and now you are living your
eternal life in me.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep
your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen