

WELCOME 4th September 2022 – 13 Pentecost '22 C

Is 55:1-11 & 2 Tim 3:1-17

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! Happy Father's Day! Today we kick-off a new worship/teaching series as a family of disciples... **Bible Study Qs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m.

As we move into this week... "Opinions are like belly-buttons.....Everybody has **one**." And just like belly-buttons...not every opinion needs to be **aired** in public. Just because someone holds an opinion, doesn't make it fact or worthy of public endorsement. Opinions are expressions of a person's feelings or attitudes around a subject that may/not be verifiable, true or have any resemblance to reality. Most opinions are based on emotion, personal history, or worldview—all of which can be completely unsupported by meaningful evidence...or change like the weather.

The Bible says; "**Fools** have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinions. - Pr 18:2. So who or what **SHAPES** your understanding – view of the world? Who or what speaks authoritatively & influentially into your life to help you discern right/wrong, good/evil, beautiful & true/horrendous & false...to help you discern how to react to the things that impact us in the world or culture? Who/what is discipling you? **Social** media? Your **dad**, because he said so! Some **internet** influencer? A close **friend**, wife or husband? Or the **Word** of God?

Today in the first part of this series we acknowledge being awash in opinions... everybody has one: but not all are equally valuable or good. Yet **THERE IS** for our lives a foundation true & trustworthy...verifiable & reliable. It's a word intended to give life in full, purpose & meaning to every day, & hope & promise beyond & bigger than this world We'll explore & experience 'Scripture in a world of opinion'.

"It is the same with my word.

I send it out, and it always produces fruit.

*It will accomplish all I want it to,
and it will prosper everywhere I send it."*

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord, our God, by the work of the Spirit alive in us, open our eyes to behold the power of your word, illuminate our understanding, & above all...quicken our lives in obedience...that those around us in your wonderful wider world would see in us the glorious life of your Son Jesus & fall freely into his saving love...In Jesus' Name...Amen.

Let's hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Who had the "greatest" influence on your life once you moved out of your parents' home? *Do they still have that role in your life?*
2. How do the Scriptures shape & influence your view of events in your life & the world?

13 PENTECOST '22 C – SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE: SCRIPTURE IN A WORLD OF OPINION

Curtis Bradford is an artist. He & his family were part of our ministry in Nth Tx. When we left to move here he gave us **this** piece of his work. Curtis works under the banner of **thought-full-art.com**...His art is a conversation...invites you to think/talk about what you see. His work emerges from his deeply reflective Xn faith. I love this piece. It's built around a quote from Plato (Gk philosopher lived ≈ 425-350BC years ^{b/4} Jesus) **We** must lay hold of the best human opinion in order that borne by it as on a raft, we may sail over the dangerous sea of life; unless we can find a stronger boat or some sure word of God which will more surely and safely carry us.

Humans have always understood life is fragile...none of us escape alive & at the same time, we are awash in opinions: how to live, what's best in life, what happens when we die, what's good for society/families/kids/groups of people, how should we treat each other, what behaviours are acceptable/not...Life hasn't changed much in 2500 years. Life is still fragile, we're vulnerable to flood, fire, fear, virus, deterioration by age illness injury or infirmity...**AND**...

We're still awash in opinions: politics, media, sports, fashion, children, education, entertainment, ice cream & especially issues of faith belief morals hopes aspirations dreams... But just because someone holds an opinion, makes a pronouncement doesn't make it fact or worthy of public endorsement. Not all opinions are equally valuable or good; some are just plain dangerous. **And** sure enough, that raft of the best human opinion is a pretty dodgy flotation device. The opinions come & go some sink or are washed away... Others are tattered & forgotten abandoned...

But off in the distance...sailing into the light breaking through the raging storm is a sure & certain ship...a study vessel whose mast reveals a cross. a sure word of God which will more surely/safely carry us...Carry us toward what? A clear marked contrast ^{b/t} living by opinion...the best human ideas & speculations & formulation & that sure word of God...

LAST DAYS = ^{b/t} Jesus 1st coming & his return DIFFICULT = fierce

You should know this, Timothy, in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves & their money. They will be boastful & proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, & ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving & unforgiving; they will slander others & have no self-control. They will be cruel & hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, & love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! In the last days, Paul says, people will pollute the air ^{w/} their own bright ideas & stand there all day screaming listen to me look at me validate me I matter I'm special I'm important my opinion my truth...the chaos of the 21st century is the death rattle of people trapped in their own opinions...*rejecting the power*...

Said last week...it's that rolling repeating cycle of brokenness...same bad decisions mistakes catastrophes over & over again...living out of their own heads...grasping grappling clutching at straws & wild ideas...one darned thing after another...Stay out of that chaos of opinion piled on opinion piled on top of self-indulgence...Listen to the Father's offer...

Is anyone thirsty? Come & drink—even if you have no money!
Come, take your choice of wine or milk—it's all free! operate by grace
Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength?
Why pay for food that does you no good?
Listen to me, & you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food.
Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, & you will find life.

Yes **THERE IS** for our lives a foundation true & trustworthy...verifiable & reliable It's a word intended to give life in full, purpose & meaning to every day, & hope & promise beyond & bigger than this world. The **BEST** of what God can give...not scraps but the **FINEST**. God offers his word his promise his very sustaining presence that in living attentive to responsive to & obedient to him/his word...**THERE. IS. LIFE.**

Life is more than being upright & taking nourishment. Life is more than having someone notice you or endorse whatever wild-eyed foolishness you happen to dream up on any given day. give you a like or thumbs up on social media **Life** means you flourish in spite of whatever circumstances hardships difficulties transpire. Isaiah speaks into dire circumstances...right ^{b/4} the Nth Kingdom Israel is conquered by Assyria... he pleads ^{w/} God's people to cling to that which is sure, certain & true...God's word – his promises for their good & for the lives of their children in generations to come. It isn't a promise of perpetual smooth sailing but a commitment to shelter them in whatever storms arise...to make them flourish in the midst of the worst they can imagine... David echoes beautifully in **Ps 56**...

O God, have mercy on me, for people are hounding me. My foes attack me all day long. I am constantly hounded by those who slander me, & many are boldly attacking me.
But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you.
I praise God for what he has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me? – Ps 56:1-4

God's word leads toward your flourishing even in spite of hardship turmoil trouble. God offers his word his promise his very sustaining presence that in living attentive to responsive to & obedient to him/his word...**THERE. IS. LIFE.** RC Archbishop Charles Chaput recently retired from his post in the US...in his book *Strangers in a Strange Land: OR Render unto Caesar*: he writes...**Evil** preaches tolerance until it is dominant, then it tries to silence good." Paul writes from prison because he is to be silenced for preaching the gospel. Empire will not tolerate truth challenging their opinion of Caesar as god that they are an eternal reign...So to Timothy...knowing the chaos that arises...

But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, & they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God & is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong & teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare & equip his people to do every good work. --- teaching, rebuking, correcting & training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. Don't look for something new. Continue in what you already know. Stay close to God's Word. Go deeper **INTO IT** so you can go farther **OUT WITH** the gospel in word & deed.

CS Lewis compares us to cars... "A car is made to run on petrol. It will not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on himself. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn; the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about faith & obedience. **God cannot give us a happiness & peace apart from himself, because it is not there.** There is no such thing." And our best reliable accessible path to the Father is his word... So let's go back to the question...

So who or what SHAPES your view of the world – life - understanding?

Who or what speaks authoritatively & influentially into your life? Who/what helps you discern right/wrong, good/evil, beautiful & true/horrendous & false...to help you discern how to react to the things that impact us in the world or culture?

Who or what is discipling you?

Are you being led by shaped by guided by the best human opinion which changes in a heartbeat, fails under pressure, leaves you adrift...or by the purposeful effective transforming saving word of God...that like rain/snow create life & grant hope & joy – fulfilment & satisfaction & ultimately points to the cross...Where **THE WORD** declares you forgiven – free – made new – at peace w/ God – his beloved child – heir to every blessing in heaven – secure for all eternity where nothing can snatch you from the Father's hand...

"It is the same with my word.

I send it out, and it always produces fruit.

It will accomplish all I want it to,

and it will prosper everywhere I send it."

TAKE IT HOME –

*If the Bible is as important for our lives as we say it is,
what will you do this week to increase your intake of God's Word?*

Let's pray...

Seek the Lord while you can find him.

Call on him now while he is near.

Let the wicked change their ways

and banish the very thought of doing wrong.

Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them.

Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously.

Father we turn to you...to your word trusting your promises of mercy & life in your presence forever. Give us only you...for in you all our strivings find satisfaction & our needs are met...in Jesus' name...Amen