



SUNDAY 27th March 2022.

HE CHOSE TO LOVE US FOREVER

Scripture: 1 Cor 6:11 and Eph 5:8–10

We have two readings as the texts for today and both may be difficult to understand. If they are it is not something to worry about for all who accept Jesus Christ in their hearts and want to change their lives do have a struggle to understand how to change and what to change.

I know I did. For thirty years, from my teens, I walked apart from Jesus and travelled along wrong roads. I was lost but I was not alone.

Do you know the poem, *Footprints in the sand?*

In case you do not I will read it to you.

One night I dreamed a dream.

As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.

Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.

For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,

One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me

I looked back at the footprints in the sand.

I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,

especially at the very lowest and saddest times,

there was only one set of footprints.

"I don't understand why, when I need You most, You would leave

me."

*He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave
you,
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.
When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you."*

When we walk apart in Jesus we are not forgotten. We are watched and God is waiting, waiting, waiting until we are fully ready to welcome Him in our lives.

At this point I would like to recount a story about myself.

Some of you may remember the Queen St killings in 1987 when nine people were murdered. I worked in that building and I was there at the time, one floor below where the killing began. One of my responses was to go to church however I only went a few times before dropping away. My reason: I was not impressed by the pastor.

Fast forward seven years, during which my life had gone downhill in many ways and I had reached a time of great personal and family distress, one Sunday morning as I passed from my kitchen to my lounge room carrying a mug of coffee, the thought of going to church came into my mind. That was in 1995. Same church. Same pastor. I liked him this time. I stayed and 27 years later here I am.

God waited until I was really ready before He knocked at my door.

Now, I have to be careful in what I say next for I am going to speak of the text before that of 1 Corinthians 6:11 for it speaks of the wicked who will not enter the kingdom of heaven. It speaks

of specific sinning. I will not list them. The sins mentioned, and I encourage you to read them, are specific. Yet they do not cover all sins.

We must always remember that God is pure and in Him there is no sin. We must also remember that we are not perfect. We sin and often we do not know we sin.

Anger is a sin. Have any of us been angry lately and expressed out that anger?

Yet, when we sin and we repent, God forgives us. We are washed clean of our sins however we must not sin again.

Here let me mention the woman brought to Jesus because she had been caught committing adultery. Under Jewish law, she had to be stoned to death. Note, though, it was only the woman brought for judgement, not the man. The story is in John 8:1 to 11.

What did Jesus do?

He knelt down and began to write within His finger in the dust. Finally, He said, *“Let him who is without sin, cast the first stone. Gradually all the accusers left. It could be said that they slunk away.”*

Jesus looked at the woman and said, “Where are they? Is there no one left to condemn you?”

11 “No one, sir,” she answered.

“Well, then,” Jesus said, “I do not condemn you either. Go, but do not sin again.”

Go and sin no more.

Now, that is hard for we often sin without realising it, as I have already mentioned.

Last month I told the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. The Pharisee stood and boasted to God how sinless he was – he forgot the sin of pride. The tax collector hung his head and said, “God, help me, a sinner.” He was justified before God, not the Pharisee.

We should always recall the tax collector’s words. They should be written on our hearts. I will repeat them – “*God help me, a sinner.*”

Let us go back to Mt Sinai to the time when God met with Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments and the Laws by which the Hebrews were to live – laws that would be broken many times. We are looking at the Books of Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy.

Under the Law the sins of the people had to be atoned for by the sacrifice of blood and that was the regular tasks of the Hebrew priesthood. God established the Day of Atonement, a special day when, through sacrifice, all the people’s sins would be atoned for by the sacrifice of two goats. One would be chosen by lot to provide the blood, the other, called the scapegoat, would be released into the desert to carry with it all sins of the people.

Then along came Jesus.

In Matthew 5:17–20, Jesus makes a very strong statement:

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke

of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus was the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets. He was sent by God, His Father, to be so as we read in John 3:16 –

“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.”

Why did God do that for us? Because He will love us forever. That does not mean He is blind to our sins. That is why He sent Jesus.

Jesus was the ultimate scapegoat. With His death on the Cross and His Resurrection, the Law had been fulfilled. The need for any further blood sacrifice was removed.

We, who have accepted Jesus, have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. This means that we are each, individually, responsible for our sins and our need for repentance, when we sin – and we will sin. None of us is strong enough not to sin.

The question is – Are we strong enough to admit our sin to God?

God sees all, even our hidden sins. We must always remember that He sees us, even when we were being formed in our mothers' wombs.

Before we accepted Jesus we walked in darkness. Once we did accept Jesus we entered the light.

In the Gospel of John, we read in the opening verses of the first chapter:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome^[a] it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

We now “live in the light of the Lord” and we are encouraged by the reading from Ephesians 5:8, to ‘live as children of light” which mean we should live in “goodness, righteousness and truth.”

This is not easy, given the temptations of the world and the nature of our society. The world has become a “me” world where we are encouraged to think only of ourselves. One of the most anti-Christian songs is “I did it my way,” made popular in 1969 by the late Frank Sinatra, who certainly did things his way. “Doing it my way” has become almost a litany of our society today. It is the

ultimate song of individualism which preaches that we should do everything by ourselves for ourselves alone.

Living for ourselves alone is not living in the light of the Lord.
Living for God and for others is living in the light of the Lord.

Humankind was created for love and for sharing and sharing is giving of oneself in the service of others.

Let us recall Matthew 25:31 to 46 and the parable of the sheep and the goats. The sheep were those who helped others in need – the hungry, the thirsty, the sick and those who needed clothes. They will be accepted when Jesus come in judgments. The goats are those who ignored the plight of the unfortunate and they will be rejected as they have not obeyed the Lord.

The sheep live in the light of the Lord.

The question is – Where does each of us live, in light or darkness?

I will end with a prayer.

*Almighty God,
by whom the world has been filled
with the light of your incarnate Word
grant, we pray,
that, as He kindles the flame of faith and love in our hearts,
so His light may shine for the in our lives;
who now lives and reigns with You
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever
Amen.*

