

Text: Psalm 119:1-16 (International Children's Bible)

Sunday 7th June 2020

Brightons Parish Church

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

SCENE 1 – In the kitchen

(MUSIC IS LOUD AND MIXER IS ON IN BACKGROUND)

(GILL ENTERS FILMING)

(SCOTT CAN'T HEAR INSTRUCTIONS FROM HOPE/GILL)

(GILL TURNS MUSIC AND MIXER OFF)

Gill - What are you two doing?

Scott & Hope – We can't hear you!

G – What are you two doing?

S&H – We can't hear you!

S - Let me turn down the music. Then we can hear Mumma.

G – What are you two doing?

S - Oh, what are we doing?

H - We're just making some bread.

S - We're making some bread. So, what do we have? We have some...

H – cake mix!

S – we have some bread mix, that's right, and some water to put in. So, we're making some bread, aren't we? Have you made bread with Mumma before?

H – Yes!

S – Yeah. You like baking, don't you?

H – I like making chocolate cake, it's my favourite.

S – that's your favourite! Why don't you pour that in just now and I'll talk to the boys and girls at church.

Hi everyone, welcome to our kitchen – and yup, Hope and I are making some bread and we couldn't hear Gill because the music was too loud. I'm going to turn it down just a little bit more so that you can hear me.

So, that reminds me a lot of **what it's like in life. Every day there are lots of noises all around us trying to get our attention. It might be our friends, what's on TV, it might be our favourite celebrity or social media influencer,...**

it might be TV programmes or announcements from government or science or health professionals – lots of voices shouting for our attention and it can be hard to hear God’s voice.

Just like we had to turn down the so that we could hear Gill, sometimes we need to turn down those other voices so that we can hear God’s voice through His Word, the Bible.

In our Psalm today, the man who wrote it was also surrounded by many voices – the voices of the arrogant and the rulers, the wicked and the oppressors. But the psalmist didn’t choose to listen to those voices, instead he chose to listen to God’s voice; he dials down the other noises and tunes in to God.

So, here's a question to think about at home for 1 minute: what are some of the voices that we need to dial down, and how can we better tune in to God, listen to God's voice? Over to you for one minute!

(PAUSE)

Welcome back everyone – I've started to make my sandwich, but I'm not really sure I've got it right, what do you think I've done wrong? I've got here my turkey and salad to put in the middle, and I really like brown sauce, so I've got HP here, no messing around with anything less. And I've got the two parts of the recipe, one for the top and one for the bottom!

Do you think this will taste any good? Give me a thumbs up for yes and a thumbs down for no! (WIGGLE THUMB)

I reckon, actually, that it's going to have to be a thumbs down – I cannot imagine eating some paper is going to taste any good, can you? No! What do I need in here? Shout it out! That's right – I need bread! The recipe is of course important, but the goal is to make bread and have a great sandwich! The goal is not only to have the recipe.

And that reminds me about another lesson from our psalm today. **Again and again the psalmist talks about 'your orders', 'your commands', 'your word', to 'obey you', 'not sin against you', 'you have spoken'. Now, who is this 'you' that the psalmist is talking about? Who is it? **It's God!** God has given us His Word, the Bible, which is full of information about how to live and what God is like; it is full of God's commands and also revelation of Him.**

But God didn't give us this just so we could have a list of instructions and become really knowledgeable about the Bible, nor is the Bible to be the thing we love the most. What did Jesus say was the greatest commandment? It was: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment.' (Matthew 22:37-38) We are to love God, love Him above everything – even above His Word – and that's because the goal is not simply to read and know God's Word, the goal is to know God Himself. Not just to know about Him in our heads, but to know Him as a person, to know Him in our hearts.

The Psalmist says in verse 2: 'Blessed are those who...seek him [God] with all their heart.' The goal is not just to have the recipe, the goal is to have the bread, the bread of life, as Jesus was called.

So, here's another question for **you to think about: as you read the Bible, are you seeking God, or are you seeking to know and follow His rules? I'll give you thirty seconds to think or talk about that just now.**

(PAUSE)

Well, here I am, at the dining table with my sandwich. We've baked the bread; we've put it all together as it should be, I've even remembered to replace the recipe with slices of bread. But is it enough to leave the sandwich sitting on the table? Am I going to be fed by it sitting there? No! Of course not! If I want to be fed, I have to eat the bread, the sandwich has to become part of me. Because the sandwich goes into my mouth, down my throat, into my tummy and there my tummy does things with the food that give my body strength and energy...

But to get that strength and energy, I need to eat the bread.

And that's our final lesson today, from this psalm: it's not enough just to have God's Word, it's not enough to know God's Word and even to know God through His Word. Quite clearly this psalm tells us that we need to put God's Word into practice in our lives. Verse 9 says: 'How can a young person [any person] stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.'

It verse 11 it also says: 'I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.' What we learn about God and His ways is meant to become part of our lives, it is meant to change our hearts, the place of our will, and so that we will the things of God.

Many of us will have seen this picture online or in the paper or news this past week: of Donald Trump holding up a Bible in front of a church. The Bible Society wrote a very powerful article about this event and they quoted the bishop, whose church was used for this event, **she said:** ‘Let me be clear, the President just used a Bible, the most sacred text of [Christians], and one of the churches of my diocese without permission, as a backdrop for a message [opposite] to the teachings of Jesus.’

And she said that because the Bible was used as a prop, that church was used as a PR location, and violence was used to make it possible.

It's not enough to have a Bible, it's not enough to know some things from it, to even know something of...

God based upon the writings in the Bible, and that's because God counts as His children, the Lord Jesus counts as His disciples, those who seek for His Word to become part of who they are, to shape their hearts and lives.

There is a place for Christians to call out the President for his behaviour, that day and so many more besides. But let's remember, that when we point a finger, three point back at us. A man called C.K. Chesterton, once replied to a newspaper which **ran the question: 'What is wrong with our world?' He replied: 'Dear Sir, I am. Yours sincerely, C.K. Chesterton.'**

These past weeks, as we have rightly championed Black Lives Matter, and responded to the injustice faced by George Floyd and many others, I have had to take...

a hard look in the mirror, on my own life and ask the tough questions, **because this psalm** excludes a faith which idolises the Bible, for we are to worship God alone, but equally, it also reminds us, that God says a faith which takes little heed of God's Word, a faith where our heart and will do not seek His ways, is a faith which in the words of the book of James, is worthless.

So, friends, let's stand with Black Lives Matter, let's be actively anti-racist, but let us also eat the sandwich, let us heed God's Word and allow it to shape us. For as I read in **an email this week**: 'World change usually starts with my change.'

Let us tune in to God's voice, seeking Him as our first love, and allow Him to change us from the inside out.

May it be so. Amen.

We close with our final hymn, “I’ll go in the strength of the Lord”.