

SERMON THEME: LIVING TO PLEASE GOD

SERMON TITLE: CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY: WALKING WITH OTHERS BY PS DR NG MOH YING

SERMON TEXT: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-28

¹²Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. ¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray continually, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²²reject every kind of evil. ²³May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. ²⁵Brothers and sisters, pray for us. ²⁶Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. ²⁷I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters. ²⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

PROLOGUE

- Paul noted with joy, how the church of Thessalonica had developed well, and that the Thessalonians were of great testimony to the believers in Macedonia, Achaia and throughout the country.
- For such testimony to be sustained, certain responsibilities of the leadership and community had to be expected and adhered to.
- For today's passage, we will look at Paul's vision of a church and its community:
 - Godly pastoral leadership, reciprocated by the love and respect from the people.
 - Loving church fellowship, where people care for each other's hurts, and are there to support each other.
 - Vibrant worship of God, which is characterized by joy, prayer, thanksgiving, and submission to the Holy Spirit and to the word of God.

A. GODLY PASTORAL LEADERSHIP (V12-13)

- A church's growth and development depend on the integrity of the leadership of the church.
- As such, leaders have responsibilities to the church.
- However, the congregation also has certain responsibilities towards the leaders.
 - First: Acknowledge our leaders.
 - To be aware of them, to accept, respect and not take them for granted.
 - God has brought up this important group of people, to lead, care and nurture His people – They are God-appointed leaders.
 - Engage them in conversations, understand their love for Christ, the word and for us.
 - Come to know of the work they have been called to do for the good of the congregation and for the glory of Christ and follow these leaders.
 - Second: Hold them in the highest regard in love.
 - We are to love our leaders exceedingly and treasure them.

- Out of this love for them, comes this willingness to provide our assistance in their ministry, and to protect them from maligning talks and discouraging gossips.
 - Make aware to them, our appreciation of their work and presence, and respect them in a God-honouring way.
- Third: Live in peace with each other.
 - Strife and dissention amongst the congregation, divides and separates the church.
 - Do not create factions and cliques, and exclude leaders based on personal preferences and bias.
 - Members having proper esteem for office → peace prevails in the church → gospel will be preached → people will grow in grace.
- The congregation has a responsibility to care for our leaders because pastoral leaders:
 - Toil diligently and endlessly, in doing the difficult and never-ending work of pastoral care and administrative duties.
 - Are sent by the Lord, and God gives them authority in shepherding us.
 - They must act in the interest of Christ and for the good of the congregation.
 - They too are under the Lord, as we are, and are accountable to the Lord for their leadership duties.
 - Are the ones who admonish, instruct, and guide us, giving us spiritual direction.

B. LOVING CHURCH FELLOWSHIP (V14-15)

- The church is to be sensitive to the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Paul talks about two groups of people, and what we can do for them:
 - Those who are troubled.
 - The idle and disruptive.
 - Are those who brings disrespect to the church, living off the gifts and generosity of the people around them, refusing to work.
 - They exhibited behaviours that are opposite to what God had designed for the orderly function of the society.
 - We are to admonish and warn them.
 - The disheartened
 - Are those who focused on the circumstances around them and the troubles they faced, hence getting overwhelmed and gives up easily.
 - They lacked faith and optimism in what God can do for them.
 - We are to be sensitive to them, encourage them, and uphold them in truth as buddies.
 - Think: To whom can I be a spiritual buddy?
 - The weak
 - Are those struggling in their faith and with temptation.
 - They are unable to control bodily appetite and struggle with life-dominating habits.
 - We are to love and support them, not to overpower them.
 - Those who cause trouble.
 - We are to be patient with everyone.
 - Patience values others enough, to give them time and space so that they can fail/fall, but learn, develop and mature.

- To make sure nobody (else in the church) pays back wrong for wrong.
 - God only allows one kind of payback – Good for evil.
 - There are three ways that we can treat people in life:
 - The way of Satan – Do evil to those who do good to you.
 - The way of the World – Do good to those who do good to you.
 - The way of Christ – Do good to those who do evil to you.
 - As Christians, we must diligently endeavour to consider and do what is good for others, as commanded by God, and to be a good testimony of our faith.

C. VIBRANT WORSHIP OF GOD (V16-18)

- There are three aspects of worship that we are called to uphold, and they are in the continuous tense, which means we are to uphold these actions regularly, continually, and in all circumstances:
 - Joy (rejoice always)
 - To be joyful is a choice, it is an attitude.
 - To rejoice is to see the hand of God in all aspects of life, because we know that God is in control and God is at work.
 - Joy is the hallmark of the Christian worship.
 - Worship = Delighting in the goodness of the Lord (Psalm 105:3).
 - Pray (pray continually)
 - Prayer accompanies all that you do, include God in all that you do.
 - For Christians, we should aspire towards prayer = breathing.
 - “I never pray for more than five minutes at a time. But I never go five minutes without praying.” – D.L. Moody.
 - Thanksgiving (give thanks in all circumstances)
 - The focus in this is “in all circumstances”.
 - We do not give thanks to God for sin, for diseases and calamities; but we thank Him in the midst of all these circumstances.
 - We trust that God is above all circumstances and that He is in sovereign control of all things.
 - We recognize that every good things that we have, come from God.
 - When we are thankful in everything. It is our constant worship to God; especially for the salvation we have through Jesus Christ.
 - *These are what God wants, desires, and requires of us.*

D. REACTING TO THE GUIDANCE FROM GOD (V19-22)

- Christian community cannot exist without discernment between truth and error.
- Paul instructs us in the following ways:
 1. “Do not quench the Spirit”
 - Do not reject anything that comes from the Spirit of God, so as not to hinder the work/ministry/gifts of the Holy Spirit.
 2. “Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all”
 - Do not disregard God’s word when it is preached.
 - While Paul instructs us not to reject anything from God, whether through the Holy Spirit or the word of God, he gives us a caveat:

- Not everything that claims to come from God, is a message that is truly biblical.
 - We need to guard against false teachings.
 - We need to test the legitimacy of the message.
3. *“hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil”*
- When we have tested the legitimacy of the message, we are to tenaciously hold on to it, as we are told to “hold on to what is good”.
 - We are told also to reject all evil, whether in thought, word or deed.
 - This evil detracts us from our walk with God.

CONCLUSION

- A healthy church consists of healthy relationships of a wonderful church community.
- The story of the rabbi reviving a desolate church monastery tells us how can we achieve this healthy church, and be church community that God wants us to be.
 - We need to be treating each other with love and respect.
 - This love is a commitment to the welfare of the other person, to their good, and their salvation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why should we show appreciation to Christian leaders among us? In what ways could we show appreciation to them?

2. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Paul gives instructions to the church regarding their ministry to one another. He is concerned that they interact properly with three types of people in the church – the idle and disruptive, the disheartened and the weak. Which on of the three forms of ministry described therein do you find most difficult to obey? Why?

3. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Paul instructs the Thessalonians to rejoice always, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances. Which of these three do you find easiest? Most difficult? Why?