

DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 25 Jun 2018)**Read - Rom 6:1-14**

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.” v 6-7

We begin a new series this week entitled: “The Way of Jesus”. Jesus came to earth to show us the right way to be in relationship with God, by His words and His life.

We discover this way through the gospels and the writings of the apostles. In the letter to the Romans, Paul makes a connection between Jesus death and resurrection and our relationship with God.

Just as Jesus had to die on the cross to pay the price for our sin, so too there is something in us that needs to die in order for us to be right with God. Our old self, governed by the standards of the world, needs to die, if we are to find life with God.

There are many who profess a relationship with God but who don't seem to want to give up their old lifestyle. They carry on living just the way they always have in doing what suits them best, often at the expense of others.

Paul is trying to make it clear that unless that old self dies ('is crucified') we will never find real life because the death of the world's way will never leave our side.

In order to live a new life, something needs to die.

Prayer: Father, please help me to kill off some of my old ways so that I can find life.

DAY 2**Read - Romans 6:1-14**

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.” v 8-10

Paul then continues his discussion on death and life to reinforce what we have been saying. It is only if we die 'with Christ' that we can then find true life.

It is only when we no longer live the self-centred way we always have that we are able to find real life – the life that only God can offer. In John 10:10, Jesus says that He came to earth that we might 'have life, life in all its abundance'. That came through an incredible sacrifice by Jesus, and requires a lesser sacrifice from us.

Real life does not come as a reward for being good, it comes as a result of a choice of a different lifestyle. There is a subtle difference there, but a critical one.

The world's way does not bring true life, only temporary thrills at best. This is not a punishment but simply a fact arising from the choice of lifestyle. Real life then comes as a result of a choice of a different lifestyle – an abandoning of the old way and a change to the new way.

The world does not see this as it focuses on the now and on the self. We can't live with this focus and find real life as real life comes from living for God and others.

Prayer: Father, please help me to live the way you want me to.

DAY 3**Read - Isaiah 1:12-18**

“Stop bringing meaningless offerings! ... Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed.” v 12, 16-17

As always, when we go to the Old Testament we find that what we have been saying is not a new thing, but the way God has always wanted it.

Through Isaiah, God is making it very clear that He is not interested in outward ceremonies (coming to church etc.) but rather in a change of lifestyle. He doesn't want us to simply express our faith and not actually live what we express.

This should not surprise us because this is what we also expect from our children – we don't want them to just tell us that they love us but rather to show through their actions that they actually do.

The pop group Extreme wrote a song that goes as follows: “More than words is all you have to do to make it real, then you wouldn't have to say that you love me, 'Cause I'd already know.”

This was intended as a romantic song, but I believe it really expresses what God is saying in Isaiah and Paul is saying in Romans. Paul however highlights that living life God's way (stopping doing wrong, caring for the oppressed etc.) actually brings real life.

Once we have died to sin, and become alive to Christ, we discover that we have now found real life.

Think: What things need to die in your life so you can find real life?

DAY 4

Read - Galatians 5:16-25

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” v 22-25

A couple of weeks ago we looked at the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. It is interesting that the verses immediately after that talk about ‘crucifying the flesh with all its passions’ and ‘living by the Spirit’.

The real point here is: What influences the way we live? If we are influenced by the world around us we are driven towards acting in selfish ways, doing what we want, when we want with little regard for others. This way of life leads to death – as seen in the world around us where divorce, crime, anger and violence rule. We now all live concerned for our safety behind high walls and security systems. This is not real life!

If we all lived according to the fruit of the Spirit, which are all concerned for the well-being of others, the world would be a much better place and we could all find real life!

We can’t change the whole world, but we can change our world and we do that by deciding not to follow the way of the world, but rather the way of Jesus. Not just talking about it, but actually living it – becoming alive to Christ.

And when we do, we find that our world becomes full of real life, even with darkness round us.

Prayer: Show me Your way, O Lord.

DAY 5

Read - Romans 6:1-14

“Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.” v 13-14

Paul ends his passage in Romans 6 with a few more important points.

Firstly, the choosing of God’s way over the world’s way is not a once-off decision that we make and then all is well. It is a daily choice and decision because we are continually under the influence of the world. Much like with the Alcoholics Anonymous programme it is a daily choice to live this way today.

There will always be temptations coming our way because we are living in a world that does not understand the idea of living for anything other than your own needs and desires. That is why everything is such a mess throughout the world. This way of living encourages poverty, war, terrorism, crime, anger and just plain selfishness.

There will still be times when we slip up and fall into the world’s way and that is where Paul’s second point comes in. We ‘don’t live under the law but under grace’.

This means that when we slip we can turn to our gracious God and ask His forgiveness and His strength to help us going forward.

Prayer: Father please keep me strong today as I seek to be alive to Christ.

DAY 6

Read - John 8:3-11

“Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” v 10-11

We started off this week by saying that ‘Jesus came to earth to show us the right way to be in relationship with God, by His words and His life’.

In this passage from John we see that. We see the amazing grace of God in forgiving the adulterer for the way she has been living her life. A life that has not brought her joy, but rather shame and near punishment – in short ‘death’.

But Jesus does not condemn her, because He understands how difficult it is to stand against the world’s way of living. After all He lived here and had to fight against the influence in His own life.

But His final words to the woman are an encouragement to go and find real life. He tells her to leave her life of sin and find a different way of living that leads to life.

Way back in Deuteronomy 30:19, after giving His commands to the Israelites, God says “Now choose life, so that you and your children may live”. Ultimately it is a choice we have to make.

We can carry on living the way the world does, and even come to church every Sunday, and not find life. Or we can do our best to live God’s way by dying to sin and then become alive to Christ.

Prayer: Father please help me to truly understand Your way and to make the right choices in my life, so that I find Your life.