

MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

4 August 2019

English Worship Service

"Present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28)

Address: 63 Cranwell Road, Singapore 509851

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Sunday School: 10 am

Sunday English / Chinese Worship Service: 10.45 am Sunday Chinese Worship Service: 7.30 pm

Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8.00 pm

Rev Colin Wong (HP : 9665 8160); Elder Daniel Tau (HP : 9761 5415); Elder Peter Ong (HP : 9626 7045)

Are We Born Kind and Loving?

(“人之初，性本善”)

An old Chinese proverb says, “We are all born kind and loving; this is our natural make up.” The fact is, we are not. However, many of us try to be kind and loving because we want people to think we are. So we work hard to cover up our unloving self so that our friends, colleagues and neighbours can embrace us affectionately. We do it because it makes us feel good but when its feeling fades away, we stop loving or be kind to others.

Why are we not born loving and kind? The Bible says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9) Jesus said, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man” (Matthew 15:19, 20a). This is the reason why you and I are not able to love the way God loves us. We need to be delivered from such depravity before we can love the God way.

What must I do in order to love the God way? We need to be born again. We need to acknowledge our sinful way, confess it to God and embrace Jesus to be our Lord and Saviour. We need God to change us internally before God’s love can fill us fully (2 Corinthians 5:17). Such God-filled love can go a long way!

Think about Jesus, a man filled with God’s love. John records, “...having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (John 13:1). Jesus knew Judas was about to betray him. Despite this, he still loved him and washed his feet (John 13:18-30). That is love – unconditional love!

How about you? Would you love your enemy to the point of washing his feet? Jesus said, “Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:12-15).

As Christians, you and I desire to love God. However, Christians have many weaknesses. Oftentimes we succumb to temptations when we are tested. We become unfaithful. We feel shameful to be called “Christian.” A classic example in the Bible was Peter. He was the chief of the apostles. He was the spokesman of the apostles. He was the one who professed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). He was the one who said to Jesus, “I will lay down my life for thy sake” (John

13:37). And he was also the one who betrayed Jesus thrice (Matthew 26:31-75).

This ought to make us think. We may profess Jesus as Lord and Saviour. We may tell him we love him very much. But in moment of weakness, will we deny him? Will we betray him? Will we be like Peter who "jump boat" on the first sign of troubles. There is a Chinese saying that says, "夫妻本是同林鸟，大难临头各自飞."

There is another category of people in the Bible who saw Jesus' miracles, welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and heard his teaching. This same group of people also shouted loudly, "Crucify him" (Matthew 27:22). Where was the kindness and love for Jesus? This sometimes happens to us. We may have experienced God's goodness in answered to prayers. But when trials of life come along our way, we join the multitudes of people shouting, "Where is God?" We forget God's goodness so quickly. We are unkind and unloving children of God.

Let me conclude with two stories. Once upon a time..... There was a little town in US, where there was a nice ice-cream shop. The children in the neighbourhood loved to go to that shop to buy their ice cream. The lady boss was very friendly and kind; often giving away free ice cream to the poor children nearby. One day, 2 little girls walked in the shop; they came for their ice cream treat. Strange, the 2 girls noticed the lady boss was not her usual self; and was yelling and swearing. The 2 girls were quite disturbed; and talking to themselves what to do. They soon receive a fair share of the lady boss' foul mood that day "Are you both buying ice cream a not? Come on. I ain't got all day. 2 tubs of ice-cream for 2 of you?" One girl responded softly and gently, saying "No; just one tub please for today. Just one tub, please." The lady boss thrust the tub of ice cream in great upset at the 2 girls and rudely brushed them aside to get away the queue. In a few moments, the lady boss was going her round of cleaning the tables; and the 2 girls have just left. She noticed a note scribbling some words (which are spelled wrongly). Roughly it says ... " We are so sad today because you are so upset and fierce. We still love your ice cream very much. We would love to tip you for making such nice ice cream. And may you be happy and smile again soon. We love you, always." The lady boss looked hard at the tip. No wonder the 2 girls took so long and hesitated to order their ice cream. The tip is the amount of monies enough to buy one more tub. The 2 girls could have bought 2 tubs of ice cream, then they need not have to share one tub. They were discussing and struggling to save that one tub of ice cream monies to present her this tip to cheer her up!! The lady boss was so touched and encouraged by such sacrifice and loving kindness the 2 girls had given her, despite of her yelling at them earlier. The 2 girls remembered the many kindness and cheers she has given to the poor kids in the neighbourhood and the many joyous occasions they have had in her shop. The 2 girls did not forget the many goodness of the lady boss, even though this time she was a bit rough on them.

If we had been there instead, what will we do? Very often, some kind words and a thoughtful deed can calm a person (even in his foulest mood) and reach into his inner remote parts to draw out that hidden "angel." This is so constructive and encouraging. Or are we so gifted with that quick an eye-for-an eye reflexes in yelling back with just as gruesome cruel words (一针见血) in self-defence to protect our face; which is destructive and would often end up drawing out a "monster" from the person. When was the last time anyone of us give out such sacrificial love, as like the 2 girls who did not forget past kindness amidst their present upset and repay in love? Would you want to express such sacrificial love in your next unpleasant encounter with someone to honor God?

In another story.....

There was a small town in the Philippines; very poor neighbourhood. People there struggled with daily lives trying to make ends meet. Thus, nobody had the time nor willingness to help others; each for their own. Every household would clean up their own house, and throw out the rubbish to their neighbours. An eye for an eye, and soon the whole community becomes very dirty. And neighbours were sore and would scold one another; everybody blaming everybody else for this big mess. There was an old man, more than 80 years old, and had been living in the same old neighbourhood all his life. Many of these

families had been around for a long while; he watched many of them grow up since they were just kids. He remembered playing with them, even giving them some livelihood advices and teaching some of them some technical skills to earn a living. He knew them well; and many were good honest people. Quietly, he started going around his neighbourhood dragging a big basket with him, and picked up whatever rubbish along the way. At the end of the day, the basket became a full load of rubbish; and very heavy. Huff and puff, this 80 year old man would drag and push the heavy basket to the front entrance to wait for the rubbish collection truck to unload the basket. Initially his neighbours ignored him as being "silly" for doing such dirty works, not appreciated, not paid and not recognised. The old man persisted one week, then two week; everyday non-stop. His neighbours saw his sacrificial love for the neighbourhood and began to appreciate him. Everyone knew the old man well. They felt heartache to see their old pal working so hard to help clean up the community and stop all the quarrelling. Initially, every household stopped throwing rubbish unto the open areas; and bring them to the front entrance rubbish gathering point. Then gradually everyone started doing simple gardening and greenery in front of their own house. The yelling and scolding stop; and everyone would try help and care for everyone.

Very often, one kind deed and a kind word could really touch other people to return in kindness and love. On the contrary, unconstructive harsh words and unkind retaliatory actions would often degenerate the situation to a destructive ending of no return. But you say "Ah, it's so silly right? This world will cut you up and eat you. Who in his right mind would do this?" Then all the more we have to cling unto God ever more tightly, so that where we are weak, there we are strong, as Jesus' grace is sufficient upon the righteous doing His will and suffering doing His will.

To obey God and do His will in loving like Jesus, however unwilling we are and silly it may seem; we are to deny ourselves and force ourselves to rely on God's strength wholly to love like Jesus. After that, we trust God entirely with the consequences. Say for instance one day, if Hitler (this 2nd world war great historical villain), or any infamous bad guy, were to appear right before you, pleading you to save him as he maybe drowning out at sea; and you happen to be nearby holding a safety float. Do you ignore him and leave him to his well-deserved plight? Jesus commanded us to love our enemies; and just as God gives sunshine and rain to the righteous and righteous too. However unwilling, however silly, we obey God's commandments to love like Jesus. We will throw the safety float to Hilter to save him from drowning; and then we will have to trust God entirely to take care of the consequences. God does not give us the right to judge anyone; but only to obey His commandments and do His will to honour Him. And we will sure receive His blessings, peace and joy and sufficient grace to be able to serve as like a lowly servant and love like Jesus.

May the Lord help us. Amen.

Dn Royce Yeo

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Theme for the Quarter :

THE MINISTRY OF DISCIPLESHIP

English Worship Service :

Rev Colin Wong

speaks on

Home Discipleship

(Scripture Text : 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15; Responsive Text : 2 Timothy 3:10-17)