

Pulling in Opposite Directions!

Deuteronomy 30⁹⁻¹⁴; Psalm 25¹⁻¹⁰; Colossians 1¹⁻¹⁴; Luke 10²⁵⁻³⁷

Lead lives worth of the Lord. [Colossians 1¹⁰]

All of us who struggle to live Christian lives in the real world feel the pull that is explicit in the readings this morning:

Paul, writing to the Colossians, is in harmony with the writer of Deuteronomy and the Psalm as well as the Summary of the Law offered by the Lawyer who questioned Jesus: **Lead lives worth of the Lord!** It's what we desire to do, but...

In each of us there resides that Lawyer who couldn't leave well alone and we read, **but wanting to justify himself....** How many of us have fallen into that trap and addressed God with that 'But'?

The opening of the Epistle to the Colossians is a glorious part of Scripture. It tells us how well supported we are as we work towards living lives **worthy of the Lord.**

We are supported in **prayer**; we live in **love**; we have a secure **hope**; we have heard **the word of truth**; we have received the **grace of God**; we have **faithful ministers** as our role models and through them we have come to know **love in the Spirit.**

The specific prayer is that we will **be filled with the knowledge of God** and that we will have **all spiritual wisdom and understanding**; that we will be **fully pleasing to [God]**; that we will **bear fruit**; that we will grow in the knowledge of God; that we will be **made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power**; and that we **may be prepared to endure everything with patience**; all while **joyfully giving thanks to the Father**; and that we will **share in the inheritance of the saints in light.**

Paul tells us that **[God] has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

This is such a positive statement of what we believe and hold and hope for. Yet, even with all this, we end up like the lawyer and, instead of seeking forgiveness when we fail, we *want to justify ourselves.*

Those hearing this parable would have gasped at the person **going down from Jerusalem to Jericho** as they knew how dangerous it was. How they would have nodded sagely when Jesus said, **he fell into the hands of robbers.**

The crowd would have understood that the **priest** would have passed by – once a year the tribe of Levi served for a week in the Temple and, had the man been dead, the Jew would have been unclean and so prohibited from service. The same would have been true of the **Levite**, the priest's assistant – they didn't need to justify themselves as it was clear why they did what they did.

You could hear the boo-hiss as the **Samaritan** appeared, expecting him to put the boot in. His actions show that he is a good man as does his willingness to act at cost to himself.

We don't know what the lawyer did: he knew the Summary of the Law, but we don't know whether he took up the challenge to **go and do likewise**, following the example of the Samaritan.

Deuteronomy is blunt: **surely this command is not too hard for you.** We have, through Paul, the summary of all that God has done for us and then the challenge from Jesus to be Good Samaritans. Yes to God is the only real justification!