

*Yesterday, Today and Forever.* A sermon for Christ the King Sunday. Sunday November 25, 2018, Preached at St. Giles' Presbyterian Church, Prince George, BC by Rev. Herb Hilder.

Lessons: PSALM 95:1-7  
HEBREWS 135-8

Taped to the window in the door to my office here, there is an enlargement of a greeting card.

It pictures a little boy and girl peering inquisitively into the lens of a camera.

In the background there is a farmhouse of another vintage.

The children themselves are dressed in clothes an earlier generation.

The sepia wash on the picture adds to the impression of another time.

Below the picture runs the caption

*Always be on the lookout for the presence of wonder*

It is a reminder which I need to hear and see a lot. How about each of you?

*Always be on the lookout for the presence of wonder*

For there is so much in my world, your world, our world that sucks out wonder all around us,

Gives everything a grey wash

Makes us lead 'Lives of quiet desperation as 19<sup>th</sup> century American essayist, Henry David Thoreau said in his classic book Walden.

So every time I enter my office here or close  
 the door to leave it,  
 There is that picture and the caption below it  
*Always be on the lookout for the presence of wonder.*  
 The picture does not ignore the truth that bad  
 things still happen to good people  
 Nor does it ignore the truth that life is difficult.  
 Rather for me,  
 It expands my field of vision and perception.  
 The here and now is not all there is.  
 There is so much else around me – most of it good  
 and wonderful.  
 So often I allow my view and perception to be  
 limited by my emotions or my moods!

Like the caption at the bottom of this picture,  
 one of the verses Eric read from the letter to the  
 Hebrews also expands my field of vision  
 For me, these words are not just fanciful and empty  
 These words are an affirmation of promise,  
 incredible hope and eternal significance!

**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and  
 forever**

It is a verse that makes me add as I read and hear  
 it – YES!

No “it depends”, no conditional qualifiers, no  
 exceptions, no restrictions.

**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today  
 and forever**

Be still for a moment and let that promise, that  
 declaration,  
 that affirmation begin to penetrate that layer of  
 busyness, preoccupation with the to do list,  
 Perhaps dullness – same old, same old,  
 Yawn

That layer perhaps even of cynicism or apathy  
 that covers so many hearts and minds  
 Breathe in each word of that promise, pausing  
 between each word

*Jesus*

*Christ*

*Is*

*The*

*Same*

*Yesterday*

*Today*

*And forever.*

Do not just rattle the verse off like some phone  
 number.

For it that not an ongoing temptation – to rattle  
 Biblical promises off in such a flurry and hurry and  
 worry that we do not give time for thought?

Ponder this verse.

Think about it

What does it mean to you right now?

What are its implications in each of our lives and for  
 all time – right now!!

## **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever**

*If a foundational block of our faith in the Risen Lord was  
always shifting,*

*We really could not model our faith in the here and now  
with the faithful who have gone before us – the  
communion of the saints*

Why?

Because it would be far too easy to conclude, to  
rationalize – that was then, this is now

| That was them times – this is today!

St. Paul and the apostles would be dated  
historical figures of long ago and far away –  
speaking about a historically dated Jesus.

However, the promise of verse 8 in Hebrews  
13 categorically says – Jesus is not some dead guy,  
Entombed on a Galilean hillside,  
But the risen and reigning Lord of time and history  
By the power of His Holy Spirit, he is as present  
with us today,

As he was to those who witnessed in the flesh,  
Jesus' teaching, healing and preaching!

**...the same yesterday today and forever.**

This is no time expired or dated Lord and Saviour  
Jesus is a present reality and a Lord who carries us  
into the future.

Good news? Great news!

Why? Well for one thing it means that Jesus is always the same in His great love for his people – before the earth was and into our future.

In the opening verses of his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul outlines this reality

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> just as he chose us in Christ<sup>[a]</sup> before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.

<sup>5</sup> He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us.

With all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

<sup>11</sup> In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance,

[b] having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, <sup>12</sup> so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.

<sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit;

<sup>14</sup> this[c] is the pledge of our inheritance towards redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory. (Eph. 1:3-14)

This is not the only place where God's love in Christ is affirmed to cover all people for all time.

How heartening it is though to know that never for a moment has God in Christ changed in the love he has for his people – you, me, any who confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever.** Good news? Great news!

For it means *that history is going somewhere.*

History is not a bunch of random events, cycle of gloom and despair.

God is in control and we are in His hands!!!

Do you remember the promise Jesus made to his followers – an important and humbling corrective to any who think it is all about them

**You did not choose me, but I chose you**

**Why? To go and bear fruit that will last (Jn15:16)**

Kingdom of God fruit – actions, behaviours,  
 lifestyle, mindset that is about service, not self;  
 Lavish giving and generosity – not miserly  
 hoarding and continual anxiety about whether we  
 will have enough if we give;

Practicing forgiveness – even with those who do  
 unforgiveable things – because we are modelling  
 God’s forgiveness of us through Christ FIRST and  
 because not to forgive makes us part of another’s  
 nightmare.

Fruit that has the aroma of God’s mercy and grace.

There may well be seasons and times in our  
 lives when we feel distant from God,  
 That he really is not listening to our prayers and  
 pleas,  
 That he really does not care

But that is our emotions and our  
 circumstances in the default position!  
 God never gives us on any of us  
 Jesus is still pressing on with his great work  
 He is still inviting us to come to Him – particularly  
 when we feel burdened or heavy laden with the  
 cares and realities of this world

Jesus longs for us to respond to him in world  
 of hope and faith echoed so well in the hymn  
Come ye sinners, poor and needy

**I will arise and go to Jesus,  
 He will embrace me in His arms;**

**In the arms of my dear Savior,  
Oh, there are ten thousand charms.**

Jesus cannot turn from or abandon his purpose of bringing us all in

**Jesus Christ the same yesterday today and forever.**

Good news? Great news!

*For there is no difference whatever in the relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ to His people – then, now and into the future.*

By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is just as ready to comfort us tonight as He was to comfort those with whom he walked the earth.

Think Mary and Martha at the time of their brother Lazarus death.

Jesus wept with them

I think Jesus weeps today for and with us in the worst moments of our lives

I think Jesus rejoices with us in our good times as he did at the marriage feast of Cana

Happy it truly is if you and I can say and really mean and know what Jesus was to Peter, what he was to John, what he was to Paul – THAT IS Jesus Christ to me – the same yesterday today and forever.

People around us change, move away, and die.

Some we thought would stand by us come what may, do not!

But Jesus is to us what He always was

Even when we get old and lose our former strength  
and cannot do what we once did,  
God through Jesus continues to say

**even to your old age I am he,  
even when you turn grey I will carry you.  
I have made, and I will bear;  
I will carry and will save. [Isaiah 46:4]**

**Jesus Christ the same yesterday today and forever.**

Good news? GREAT news! *For the promises Jesus  
Holds out to every generation have never changed.*

Jesus and his Word still saves people from the guilt,  
the power, the punishment of sin.

That is not a popular word today – sin

It sounds too churchy and used too much by a lot of  
self-righteous people.

Many therefore conclude it is a word only for  
church people.

No...it is for ALL people!

All of us have thoughts, say things, and do things  
that drive wedges between God and us,

Between others and us

And cause turmoil within ourselves

The acknowledgement that the world is out of  
joint!

That is sin!

And it does not just go away if we ignore it  
Practice retail therapy or maintain a full and busy  
schedule.

In the quiet of the night – when our world is somewhat calmer and we have to slow down – that realization of the world's out of jointness or our out of jointness with the world surfaces

Rationalization, justification, blaming others does not take the out of jointness away!

There is only one way the out of jointness can be removed.

There has always been only one way the out of jointness can be removed

There will always be only one way that the out of jointedness can in our lives can be removed

And that way begins by saying *Lord Jesus, I need your help*

*I cannot do this thing calling living all by myself*

Or it may take the form of the prayer spoken by Martin Luther in the depths of his despair of not thinking he to be worthy enough for God – HELP ME LORD!

Or it might take the form of the Roman soldier who spoke directly to Jesus – Lord, I believe, now help my unbelief

Jesus Christ still makes all things new

Jesus Christ still creates new hearts and right spirits in people.

We just need to open our hands and humbly ask – Lord Jesus come into my life in a new way, I need you

To be in the mindset of the hymn writer, Augustus Toplady's Rock of Ages

**Nothing in my hand I bring,  
 simply to the cross I cling;  
 naked, come to thee for dress;  
 helpless, look to thee for grace;  
 foul, I to the fountain fly;  
 wash me, Savior, or I die.**

This is a hard thing to do – this completely trusting Jesus,

This living daily with him as your centre  
 For both our pride and our wanting to be in control  
 are very strong

And yet over the centuries the witnesses and followers of Jesus all attest that is only with Jesus at the centre, on equal footing to God and the Holy Spirit that we will find a truly purposeful and satisfying life.

**24 Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, 25 to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.**