

408 The Way, the Truth and the Life

Last week we reflected on that telling scriptural statement, “the blood is the life”. Jesus’ Jewish hearers assumed that when He told them to drink blood, He was blatantly breaking the Mosaic Law. But far from breaking it, Jesus was about to fulfil that law perfectly (as in Matthew 5.17-18), by the voluntary shedding of His own innocent blood. In so doing, Jesus was the “Antitype” of all those blood sacrifices under the Law, which had only ever been “types” pointing forward to the Antitype, Jesus Himself. This is why He explained that those who believe in Him must therefore “eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood” to receive eternal life, and until they do that, they continue to “have no life in them” (egs., Hebrews 9.11-15; 10.10-24 / John 6.53; 3.3-6, 14-18, 36 / II Corinthians 5.17-21 / I Peter 1.1-9).

Now in practice, our “drinking of Jesus’ blood” occurs purely spiritually, by faith. We “drink” initially when we come to faith in Jesus as our own Lord and Saviour; and then we “drink” constantly thereafter in our daily discipleship, as we walk with the Lord, asking to receive afresh into our lives Jesus’ very life by the in-filling of the Holy Spirit (eg., I John 4.13; 5.5-8 / Romans 8.1-11).

We also attend “the Lord’s Supper”, Holy Communion, with the bread and wine being symbols of the underlying spiritual truths of the occasion, that is, a time of remembrance, of thanksgiving, of spiritual refreshment, and of proclaiming the Lord’s death until He comes (egs., Luke 22.19-20 and parallels / I Corinthians 11.23-26). In Articles XXVIII – XXXI of the Thirty Nine Articles in the Book of Common Prayer, we are given helpful, concise, scripturally-grounded statements of what is, and is not, happening as we receive the bread and wine of the Lord’s table.

With our focus as ever on Almighty God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and as Creator, Saviour and Comforter, it is appropriate that we now briefly consider some current major issues of our times, that we may be informed, alert and effective in prayer.

First is the Covid-19 pandemic, which needs little further attention here. Scripturally we can gather that the Lord is allowing this thing to continue as a real warning that His patience with God-defying nations and peoples is wearing very thin. Our prayers are not so much about the Lord taking the virus away, but rather that He will fulfil His gracious purposes in His letting it run – notably, that He will be turned to once again with repentance, confession and obedience.

Second and more immediately is the presidential election to be held next week in the United States, with both candidates of course having points for and against them. Joe Biden will set out to be a healer of an angry, deeply-divided nation, though apparently he is socially liberal and is in the pockets of “the hard Left”. Donald Trump has many very obvious flaws, yet has a track record as President of slowing the prevailing liberal social trends in America, of boosting the economy and of really getting to grips with issues surrounding Israel and her neighbours. He remains a highly divisive figure, loathed by “the Left” yet adored by “the Right”, many of whom are Bible-believing Christians. In our prayers we can pray for each of these men and the people around them, and that God in His mercy will ensure a clear and peaceful outcome as He moves forward His will for the United States and for the rest of us.

Third is the steadily growing presence of Islam in the West, a presence that has profound implications for us all but over which governments and police usually pretend that there is no problem; the recent appalling deeds in France in the name of Allah are just the latest in a long series of outrages. Whenever such attacks occur, Islamic community leaders tend to react as follows: such attacks have nothing to do with true Islam; any criticism of Islam is blatant “Islamophobia”; Muslim communities are the true victims; the West must accommodate the Muslim communities now in their midst, not the other way round. Frankly each one of these responses is nonsense, (see for example <https://www.jihadwatch.org>), but they are proving very effective in dampening down justified debate about Islam. Meanwhile Muslim numbers in the West are steadily swelled by higher birth rates and ongoing immigration. The whole matter is clearly sensitive but requires our strong prayers and our courteous speaking out as the Holy Spirit leads.

Thankfully at the heart of human existence there remains the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has told us, “I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14.6). And how is that coming possible? Because Jesus has shed His own blood on behalf of us all (John 1.29 / Romans 3.21-26).