

**A CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP
PSALMS OF ASCENT (Introduction)**

Competing with Horses

Text: Jeremiah 12:5

Key Word: Discipleship

Key Thought: A Call to Discipleship is not an Easy Road to Travel

Anyone who has been a Christian even for a short time recognizes that this world is not an easy place to live as a Christian. Most of us have faced the indirect hostility and indifferent opposition to what we believe and practise.

This has caused the Church to huddle together looking for answers. The trouble it has created is that many are desiring a quick fix and believe that they can rightfully demand it from God. We have become accustomed to 30 second repair jobs because of the influence of TV commercials. Our attention span and patience have been greatly affected by this lack of reality.

Since the Church proclaims that it has the answer, we have many people "giving it a shot." Where we have failed is in creating a sustained interest for those who are in a "searching or seeking mode." Many have claimed to be Born Again yet the evidence of a mature Christian discipleship is vague.

The Church has tried to "spruce up its presentations" in an attempt to attract the unbeliever. These presentations quickly lose their attractiveness and the novelty is discarded. We have inoculated many people to the gospel message.

Few new converts are signing up for a patient acquisition of life-changing virtues. They seek forgiveness but choose not to forgive. Holiness is quickly being replaced by Wholeness.

There Are at Least 3 Types of Thinking Found in the Church as We Take Our Journey into a Walk of Faith.

- I. A TOURIST MENTALITY**
- II. A DISCIPLE MENTALITY**
- III. A PILGRIM MENTALITY**

I. A TOURIST MENTALITY

Some have been led into a "tourism mentality." People travel to an attractive site to acquire a period of leisure. They look to be served but are oblivious of the need to serve others with a humble heart. Their time is spent looking for the next retreat, convention or rally to feed their hunger for a religious diet.

These people keep running after a new face; they want to hear a new truth; and receive a new experience. Almost anything is tried until something else comes around to take its place.

Gore Vidal has hit the nail on the head when he speaks about

"today's passion for the immediate and the casual."

We are encouraging an impatience of God's timing for our lives. Pastors are fast becoming tour guides bringing their group to the next sighting so souvenirs can be purchased. I am not interested in building up our church to worship at some sacred shrine and then move onto the next sight.

"The essential thing in heaven and earth is . . . that there should be long obedience in the same direction."

Fredrich Nietzsche

The prophet Jeremiah asked a question that seems to hit the nerve of the problem of looking for an easy way out.

"If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan."

Jeremiah 12:5

I. A TOURIST MENTALITY (Contd.)

*** In April 1978 Sharon and I went on a trip to Hawaii. It seemed like the entire mind set of the islanders was to serve our every need. "*How can I serve you better*" was often remarked as we were pampered.

I must admit that I enjoyed it for the short period that it lasted. It was a nice change not to wash dishes or make beds etc. We enjoyed seeing the new sights and sounds of the island. We were learning as well about history as we toured the USS Arizona memorial at Pearl Harbour.

We even ventured out to the northern part of the island to discover the pineapple and sugar cane fields. There were plenty of attractions for anyone in a tourist mind set and mentality.

Yet I can honestly say that I would have lost my desire to visit these places after a short while. After all once you've seen one sugar cane field, you've seen them all.

We also tried our hand at body surfing. It was a real thrill when I was at the top of the wave. But every wave passed me by with time. As I made my way to shore, I recognized that I had wasted a lot of energy just fooling around.

I learned very quickly what an undertow was all about. I couldn't see any problem on the surface. Yet when I swam toward the safety of the shore, I soon recognized that something was trying to pull me back into the deeper water. I finally reached the shore exhausted and thankful to have my feet planted on "terra firma."

I wonder how many tourists have found themselves washed up on Sunshine Beach because of being overcome by the strength of the undertow of the waves? ***

The Church must quickly move out from this tourist mentality or it will also find itself washed up on the shores without any energy to go on. **The very thing that we feel will bring us life can and will take life from us.** The warning must be heeded. There is something much higher and rewarding to reach for.

II. A DISCIPLE MENTALITY

The N.T. Greek word for a disciple dealing with this area is "*mathetes*." It describes the lifelong journey of apprenticeship that every Christian matures in their relationship with Christ. **A disciple of Christ is someone who has decided to become a Lifelong learner.** I am not speaking so much in the area of an **academic level** as much as a **craftsman level**. We are rather becoming moulded into the image of our Master.

II. A DISCIPLE MENTALITY (Contd.)

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

II Corinthians 3:18

III. A PILGRIM MENTALITY

The Psalms of Ascent are a clarion call to rise higher in God. Every faithful Hebrew would make at least three major pilgrimages every year. In the spring they would travel for the **Feast of the Passover**. During the summer they rejoiced at the **Feast of Pentecost**. While in the fall they returned to Jerusalem for the **Feast of Tabernacles**.

These 15 Psalms are better understood when we realize that the people were in a time of transition while singing them. They are like us travelling our pilgrim pathway. Some are making their trek from **adolescence to adulthood**. For others it is like those who move from **doubt to faith**. It is as unsure and dangerous a journey as that of a trapeze artist who has let go the bar and is planning to execute his next move.

For this reason people would rather sit in the stands and enjoy the excitement of watching others take risks. They prefer the quick fix instant charisma.

The Psalms of Ascent are those sung by pilgrims who are leaving a life of sin to arrive at holiness; or those leaving a life of the works of the law in order to arrive at justification by faith. So we join in with the voice of one calling in the wilderness as the prophet Isaiah was when he said,

"Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.'"

Isaiah 2:3

"And you will sing as on the night you celebrate a holy festival; your hearts will rejoice as when people go up with flutes to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel."

Isaiah 30:29

III. A PILGRIM MENTALITY (Contd.)

Let us travel not as tourists but rather as pilgrims on this roadway of discipleship into the very mountain of the Most High God. These 15 Psalms will become our roadmap as we travel.

"They are not monuments, but footprints. A monument says, 'At least I got this far,' while a footprint says, 'This is where I was when I moved again.'"

William Faulkner

The Psalms of Ascent are the steps which we can walk upon as we climb up our mountain of faith. There are no shortcuts. The climb is often steep. Yet must continue to climb upward and onward.

The Church in Canada is at a crossroads. I believe that we need more light at the fork of the road than any other place. It is very important to catch a glimpse of where our pathway is leading us. Anyone who sets out on the trek with an undisciplined walk will enter into much trouble. Leaders must give a clarion call so the people can follow with assurance of heading the right way.

It is time to move upward not just onward. It's time to get off the road of least resistance. Jerusalem is located at the highest geographical location in Palestine. Mount Zion was the highest place in Jerusalem. Lets set our hearts on a pilgrimage of truth over the next number of months as we travel through the teaching of the Psalms of Ascents.

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Date: Apr 3/16

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: "Draw me Close to You" - Bb

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