

THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE – Pitcharan

(First published in *The New Leader*, 1-15 January 2019. Last updated in March 2020)

Despite our fallen nature, one capacity that remains intact in all humans or rather all creation, is the ability to gratefully respond to love. Our sense of gratitude for the countless blessings from God, paves the way for the free flow of grace, without which we just can't understand or realize God's greatest offer to all humans— the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. How exactly and when this happens is unique to each person but the highest common factor is this— *there's no looking back from the moment we say yes to the offer.*

This ultimate gift is too wonderful and we just can't stop at rejoicing and thanking, however profusely we may do it. True gratitude will not let us be satisfied with giving any amount of praise and thanks, but is bound to seek to serve the Lord with all our inmost being. Now, what does such service entail? It encompasses the whole process of Christ being formed in us, including our drawing others to him through our true following.

Practically it is as simple as this— sharing a wonderfully joyful experience with others; but the challenge lies in NOT growing weary of sharing. While the former comes quite easily to most of us, the latter is indeed a huge challenge or rather the biggest challenge. It can become a reality only when we are able to sustain our joy by *abiding in Jesus.*

When we let the joy of Christ permeate every aspect of our life, no tribulation or trial is able to deter us, as the heavenly foretastes continually motivate and cheer us. Our role is just co-operating humbly and whenever we succumb to the urge of being our own selves, we face the great danger of feeling frustrated and directionless and even worse— *depressed.* But if we allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit, the impossible becomes easily possible.

To err is most human but to learn from errors is a matter of grace which is the permanent reward when we choose gratitude over satisfaction, humility over pride and pain over pleasure. It's a mysterious and long drawn battle within ourselves and patience is gained the hard way as we learn to shed all ideas of *short cuts* and *paths of least resistance.* Even our worst pains become trivial when we experience the miraculous formation of Christ in us and also see this happen in some others who were drawn to him through us.

Pride is the deceiving demon that generates impressive illusions of our own ideas while obscuring our discernment of God's plan. Another frequent deception caused by pride is the false feeling of having accomplished something great when the truth is that we played a very limited role and

happened to obey God by chance. The fall that invariably follows every *overconfident prideful fantasy and pursuit,* is truly the *foretaste of hell* and in fact, serves as an effective deterrent. These falls will remind us of the proud misadventure of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) and enable us to meekly repent as we *come to our senses.* This is the most effective process of growing in the virtue of humility. As we progress to obey by choice rather than chance, these twin cardinal truths become ingrained in us – *however lofty and noble our own desires may be they all have to be given up if they are not part of God's plan for us – our role and mission is simply doing God's will and it is he who assigns us our tasks.*

The habit of daily examination of conscience and genuinely humble repentance, sometimes with tears, is formed in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. This reality will baffle us because of those miserable past failures of repeated attempts at developing this very habit on our own. May seem unbelievable but absolutely true— *repentance too is a gift from God.*

To sum it up, Jesus Christ is the Way and the Truth and the Life and becoming Christ-like is God's plan and will for all humans; attaining this ultimate goal is enabled by gratitude which is emulating the love we experience from God and neighbour (see Luke 10:29–37).

"If you love me you will keep my commandments."
(John 14:15 JB).

"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others."
(Marcus Tullius Cicero —106-43BC)

"And if anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward." (Matthew 10:42 JB)

"And so I tell you this: use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends, and thus make sure that when it fails you, they will welcome you into the tents of eternity" (Luke 16:9 JB)

On the other hand, our nemesis is ingratitude:

"Ingratitude is the most abominable of sins and as such it is the cause, beginning, and origin of all sins and misfortunes." (St. Ignatius of Loyola in his letter to Father Simão Rodrigues —18 Mar 1542)

.. they knew God and yet refused to honor him as God or to thank him; instead, they made nonsense out of logic and their empty minds were darkened. (Romans 1:21 JB)