

Home Group notes for the week following Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2014

**THEME: FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

**As we Gather**

Both readings this week are concerned with the blessings and responsibilities which are part of reverence (respect) for God, and individual growth in holiness and godliness.

**Reading Scripture**      **Psalm 112 and Matthew 5 : 13 - 20**

**Thinking together**

God protects the hearts and minds of those who revere / fear / respect Him and delight in obeying His commands (see Psalm 112:1-9).

**What does it mean to be upright / righteous? Discuss**

**What are the blessings available to the faithful disciple? Discuss**

Matthew's gospel (chapter 5:13-20) continues to record Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Verses 13-16 record Jesus' teaching on growing in holiness, and verses 17-20 that of growing in godliness.

In the old covenant Israel was called to live apart from other nations in order to develop a national relationship with God, but Jesus now calls His disciples to a new covenant of holiness proceeding from the heart – holiness which is the outcome of a personal love for / loyalty to God, and awareness of the fulfilling fruitfulness originally intended by God for all people.

In the time of Jesus, salt was connected through its source (sea and sun) with purity. It was also used as a preservative of, and to give flavour to, food. Jesus says His disciples are the salt of the earth (v13)

**How can a Christian be an example of purity in today's world? Discuss**

**How can Christians have a cleansing / preserving effect on society? Discuss**

**How can Christians give flavour to life (the community)? Discuss**

Jesus also says His disciples are the light of the world (vv14-16).

The radiance of the Christian is therefore the reflection of Christ's light – coming from the presence of Christ within the Christian's heart.

**In what ways can disciples reflect Christ's light in everyday living? Discuss**

**How can you ensure that all your good deeds glorify God, not self? Discuss**

Growing in godliness / godly living is part of a disciple's maturing, resulting in experiencing the blessings of heaven on earth (the kingdom of heaven is near).

Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-20 that He came to fulfil the Law. To understand this it is necessary to know that the Jews used the phrase 'The Law' in a number of different ways –

- To mean the 10 Commandments
- To mean the first five books of the Bible (Pentateuch)
- To mean the whole of scripture (Law and the Prophets – i.e. Old Testament)
- To mean the oral law, or law of the Scribes who interpreted the broad principles laid down in the first three types of law, and made the rules and regulations relating to most of the possible situations of daily life.

It was these thousands of rules and regulations that Jesus condemned.

He came to demonstrate the real meaning of the principles that God had laid down – the principles of reverence for God and respect for all fellow human beings. These form the moral foundations of all relationships. Jesus set before all mankind the love of God, to fulfil the messianic prophecies.

**How do Christians enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matthew 5:1-11 & 20)? Discuss**

### **In Closing**

Goodness based on heart-love is reflected in our attitude to, and in the quality of, our obedience to God's will.

### **Obedience**

- Comes from what God does in us (changes our hearts)
- Is God centred
- Is based upon reverence for God
- Goes beyond keeping the law, to living by the principles of the law

**What principles did Jesus say would indicate to the world that a person is His disciple?**