

Sermon 7 November 2021

Ephesians 1:15-23

The following notice was spotted in the Lost and Found section of a newspaper: 'Lost dog - \$50 reward. Black and tan of poodle and German shepherd descent. Flea bitten, left hind leg missing, no hair on rump, blind and recently neutered. Answers to the name of Lucky.'

Things are certainly a little dire at the moment but we are probably not in quite as bad a shape as Lucky. In many ways, we probably can count ourselves a little lucky, if we compare our situation with that of many other countries where many thousands are contracting COVID and thousands have died and are still dying.

For those of us who have a faith, perhaps we can also count ourselves a little lucky. What do I mean by that? Well, there is no doubt that when we are faced with trials and tribulations, having a faith can certainly help us to navigate those difficult times. James talks about how having a faith can be quite a positive at these times. *'Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble come your way, let it be an opportunity for joy.'* James 1:2. James never does beat about the bush. However, he is really referring to it as a time for growth but the principle is the same. He does take it a step further in verse 12. *'God blesses the people who patiently endure testing.'*

In our reading from Ephesians, Paul makes the point that we have much to benefit from a relationship with God. *'I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe.'* So there is undoubtedly much to be gained from having a faith, not the least being some of his power which, of course, we need as we struggle with life's challenges.

Paul Chappell, president of the West Coast Baptist College in Minnesota, said, *'God shows his power through your storm.'* And there is that wonderful verse, Romans 8:31 – *'If God is for us, who can be against us?'*

We talk about faith, because in the end we cannot really prove the existence of God. Does God really exist? What is God like? I cannot give you irrefutable answers to these questions. I can share with you, I can point to weighty evidence which itself points to the existence of God, but in the end the buck stops with each one of us personally. Only you can sort out what you believe and what is right for you.

I would make one point. Until we have thought seriously and sincerely about God and opened ourselves to the possibility of God, we are not really in a position to either refute or deny him. Let me tell you a short story.

An atheist was harshly denouncing Christianity in a speech. At one point, he challenged his audience, 'If anyone can prove I am wrong, come to the platform.' After a lengthy and

uncomfortable silence, an elderly man stood up and walked to the stage. 'Produce your proof that I am wrong,' challenged the atheist.

Without a word, the gentlemen took an orange from his pocket, calmly peeled it, and ate it. Impatiently, the atheist asked, 'Well, what is your proof?' The old man replied with a question of his own. 'How did it taste?' he asked, referring to the orange he had just eaten.

'How on earth would I know?' came the reply, 'I didn't eat it!' 'Exactly,' replied the elderly gentleman, 'and I just showed you what I found out about Christianity. I tasted it and it was good.'

He makes a very good point.

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