

SERMON

2 Corinthians 3:17,18

The Lord is the Spirit

Nunawading and Waverley, 12-6-22

My father died at fifty years of age and I was 22. My family and I went to the funeral parlour to view my father. But was that my father? From an earthly perspective it clearly was and yet our heavenly Father had reconciled my father to himself. Jesus had died for him. Our Lord emerged from a cemetery for him and promised him eternal life at his side. In the scale of things, my father was just a speck, a person in time unknown to most. The promise of the indwelling Spirit proclaims that God's life was in him; and still is.

The Lord is the Spirit. What is Scripture telling us? Normally, the apostle Paul calls Christ the Lord. The word Lord is also applied to the God of the Old Testament, whom we understand as our heavenly Father. **The Lord is the Spirit**, God the Father is spirit. Jesus, though he has an earthly nature, is essentially spirit. Clearly, the word is speaking of the Holy Trinity.

Coming back to ourselves and our physical world, it is so painfully clear to us that we are mortal. Touch your arm and consider how solid yet, like the rest of our body, will break down to mostly carbon and hydrogen. When you are injured, perhaps on the sports field, having a body means pain. The old cities in an archaeological dig were once thriving, filled with people buying and selling at the market but are just mounds of dust now. A burnt-out star that has become a white dwarf, reminds us that the even some of the longest existing things will decay and lose what once powered them.

By saying that **the Lord is Spirit**, the word is telling us some wonderful news. The Spirit has brought Christ to us. Christ is the Lord of life for he rose from the dead, defeated evil, removed the power of the law to condemn us and the devil to accuse us. The Spirit, who is equal in lordship with the Son and the Father, now brings this tremendous life of Christ to us. The Spirit is perfect, he is glorious, he has within him all the power of an infinite number of universes within him and now he is here within us. There is no shame, no suffering, no attack that can overcome the brand-new existence the Spirit has brought to us. Thus, Paul can write: **where this Spirit is, there is freedom.**

But where is he? By saying, the Lord is Spirit he is clearly not of this universe. He is unseen and not like any created object. Let's think of where all that we can observe comes from. From the Big Bang. And before that? Well, some theoretical hyper-inflation event. Where did that massive quantum field come from? What physical laws govern it? Clearly, something cannot come from nothing - unless you are the Spirit! For the Spirit is not of this universe. Close your eyes for a moment. Indulge me for a moment. Imagine nothing. No universe and no universe making system. Nothing. It is almost impossible to think of nothing. The Spirit exists in this nothingness. He is simply pure being without the restraints of our physical world.

Where is this Spirit? He is in all those who believe and are baptised; he is in you and me. The, Spirit, beyond this universe and not of it all, dwells in our lowly bodies. The inevitable conclusion of the Spirit dwelling in you and me is in the next marvellous verse: **and we...are being transformed into Christ's likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.** The wonky teeth, the ache in the back, the vulnerability to a pandemic, all of these weaknesses are heading, step by step to glory, higher and higher up those steps, each year of our life taking us to a greater glory. You do not need to talk about a soul to understand this. There is no supernatural part of us that can beat death. There are only two things in all of existence: the physical and the spiritual, the earthly and the heavenly, the human and the Spirit. Without the Spirit you are only a decaying body. With the Spirit, you are alive in God. **But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God,** Paul says later. You are either renewed, transformed, resurrected and lifted up to glory by the Spirit or you are clay. If my body returns to the earth, it is not a soul that is in heaven but the new Wayne dwelt in by the Spirit. I am in **the Lord, who is the Spirit** by faith and I cannot be separated from him. Can you separate the dissolved sugar in a cup of tea? Of course not, and so your life is found in his.

There is no limit to the Spirit and no restriction. He can come to you now and to the 7 billion people on this planet if they open themselves to him. He brings the Father, our creator, and the Son, Jesus, our redeemer. **And with the Spirit, there is freedom.**