

Psalms 19 verse 7

The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.

⁸ The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

⁹ The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever.

The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰ They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;

they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹ By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³ Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation of
my heart

be pleasing in your sight,
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Mark 12: 28 The Greatest Commandment

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

²⁹ "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.'³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'³² There is no commandment greater than these."

³² "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him.³³ To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

What do the saints have in common?

You all know by now that the Bible refers to all believers as saints...but for the sake of clarity I am thinking about the notable Christians we call saints.

There are of course lots of stories of unusual and miraculous events, but there are far more saints who are appreciated for their spirituality and not for any particular miracle.

It seems to me that they have quite a lot in common, and the further they went down the road less travelled the more they share in common.

Let's just talk about this idea, the road less travelled.

It is the title of the best selling book by M. Scott Peck and is based on his work as a psychiatrist – not just any psychiatrist, but serving in the US army rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel. In later years he was in private practice.

Interestingly it was written before he made a Christian commitment, but there's nothing in the book a Christian could disagree with.

The book is described in this way *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*

The purpose of the book is to describe the attributes that make for a fulfilled human being...but it corresponds to the spiritual journey that the saints have taken to go deeper and further in faith.

Why am I suggesting that the spiritual attributes of the saints should come under the title the road less travelled?

Because there are a great many people with a genuine and sincere Christian faith who settle for it being in the shallow end of the pool, never daring or wanting to swim to the deep end.

Perhaps it looks a bit too costly to go further down the road...(and I know I am mixing metaphors - roads / swimming pools) don't worry about it.

But maybe the saints will encourage us to realise that the cost of the journey is worth it – worth it far more than you can calculate.

I want to think about three saintly attributes I think are to be highly prized and the first step on the road towards them is to want them!

Simplicity

Now you could argue that anyone in a monastic life gets simplicity as a by-product. You own next to nothing. You have left all family ties. Your day is set out as a rhythm of worship, prayer, work, silence, meals and rest. You lead a simple life. It's easy for them.

And yet there are a great many saints who have tremendous responsibilities, a great workload, and whose lives have been just as much involved and complicated as ours might be.

Simplicity is an attitude of mind and spirit, not just the circumstances in which you live.

For example the saints can sum up the life of faith very simply.

Ita was asked what three things please God

True faith in God with a pure heart
A simple life with a grateful spirit
Generosity inspired by love

Brother Lawrence sums up the spiritual life as faith, hope and love.

“In the practice of these we become united to the will of God. Everything else is indifferent... All things are possible to him who believes. They are less difficult to him who hopes. They are more easy to him who loves, and still more easy to him who perseveres in the practice of these three virtues. ”

he adds that if we can do absolutely everything for the love of God, we're there.

The Psalmist, in lyrical style is keeping the faith simple.
Different words, same thought

The law of the Lord is perfect,

The statutes of the Lord

⁸The precepts of the Lord

The commands of the Lord

⁹The fear of the Lord

The decrees of the Lord

Jesus made the spiritual life simple.

Love the Lord your God (heart soul mind and strength)
and love your neighbour as yourself.

And here's the rub on simplicity. It's not for me to tell you what the next step is. Because a heart set on this pilgrimage will always be led step by step.

The saints did not carry any guilt.

How would you like to live without any shred of guilt whatsoever?

No nagging feeling that you haven't done enough, or become enough, or aren't somehow making the spiritual grade?

Even the psalmist was somewhat anxious about hidden faults and sins.

Do you ever have that sneaky feeling that everyone else is a better Christian than you? They know more, they're better at it, they probably prayer all night at least once a week. They can quote great chunks of the bible and sing the hymns without needing the words.

Jeff Lucas the international Christian speaker and teacher told the story of being at a Christian power conference and met a woman at breakfast. He imagined she'd already spent the morning prophesying and healing people but she looked a little care worn and as they talked the story came out.

She took her car to the car wash with her children in the back. Just as the water and the rollers started the drivers window next to her fell out. She panicked.

So she got on the seat and stuck her bottom in the window.

I try not to imagine the scene.

Jeff realised that the fault here is in him. He's carrying the guilt. I'm not good enough, everyone is better at this than me.

On Friday nights I say the Boisil Compline – I have a different night prayer for each day of the week. It has this line...

Keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of Your wings.

Through Jesus we are forgiven, no need for guilt. We are also the apple of God's eye...we are cherished and the energy we put into hiding our anxious guilt can be better used elsewhere.

The saints I love did not carry guilt.

And the third facet today comes from St. Terry of Ascot – who like brother Lawrence has a constant message to which he returns time again.

Saints learn to live loved

It can take us a long time to realise just how much we are loved by God and what tends to get in the way is that we don't love ourselves very much to begin with.

The saints I admire, Aidan and Cuthbert, Hild and Chad, Brother Lawrence and I'm really quite fond of St. Francis, St. Theresa, Boisil, Feldgild...

were openly aware that they were capable of sinful actions...but returned frequently to the grace of God's forgiveness.

Brother Lawrence was very open that without God's help he would stumble far more frequently than he did, but he

simply confessed his many faults, and enjoyed the joy of the love of God's forgiveness.

The saints came to realise just how profoundly God loved them. That love set them free into the simplicity of life style and freedom from guilt.

God is on your side.

God has done all he can to demonstrate his love.

You have his favour.

You are the apple of his eye.

Sometimes we fight back – why doesn't God answer all my prayers the way I want, why did I get sick, why do bad things happen. They can seriously challenge us. But the Saints discovered that they could view all these things from within the love of God, not as proof God abandoned them.

Simplicity, freedom from guilt, learning to accept and lived loved.

Don't they seem attractive to you?

Revd. Jon Hutchinson, 2 November 2025