

Sermon

28 June 2020

West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood

By: Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald

Reading: Psalm 19

Hymn: MP 167: Give me oil in my lamp

Summer Family Service

INTRODUCTION

Today I would like to talk to you about the Bible. The Bible is an amazing book. A book like no other...

It's been written and put together thousands of years ago, and it is still read by people today. By people all over the world, as a matter of fact, as the whole Bible's been translated into 698 different languages, and the New Testament into 1548 languages. To be honest, I didn't even know that there were that many languages in the world!

There are 2 main sections to the Bible: The Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament there are 39 chapters, and in the New Testament 27. These 66 chapters are completely different books actually, all under the same cover.

And there are so many different genres in the Bible: There are poems and songs, serious bits and funny bits, love stories, adventure, history, rules, philosophical discussions... You name it, and it's there.

You would think that a book this old would end up in a museum somewhere, with dust gathering on the cover, but no – this is no old-fashioned book, filled with boring details... In this *one* book you can read how an ordinary girl became a beautiful princess who made the temperamental king eat out of her hand, and in this way she saved all her people. Sounds like a fairy tale, doesn't it? But then you can also read about giants, flying horses and a fire breathing dragon with 7 heads – how's that for adventure? And then... You can also read to what extremes God went to save us all through his son. A story about the love a Father has for his children... And there is so much more.

So today I chose just one of the interesting things in the Bible to talk to you about. Did you know that the word "honey" appears in the Bible 61 times?

Let's now read one of these passages together.

READING

PSALM 19, a selection of verses

The heavens tell the glory of God.

And the skies announce what his hands have made.

Day after day they tell the story.

Night after night they tell it again.

They have no speech or words.

They don't make any sound to be heard.

But their message goes out through all the world.

It goes everywhere on earth.

The Lord's teachings are perfect.

They give new strength.

The Lord's rules can be trusted.

They make plain people wise.

The Lord's orders are right.

They make people happy.

The Lord's commands are pure.

They light up the way.

It is good to respect the Lord.

That respect will last forever.

The Lord's judgments are true.

They are completely right.

They are worth more than gold,
even the purest gold.

They are sweeter than honey,
even the finest honey.

They tell your servant what to do.

Keeping them brings great reward.

MESSAGE

The Psalmist says that God's word is sweeter than honey.

The people of God were led out of Egypt to the land of milk and honey.

John the Baptist lived in the desert and ate locusts and wild honey.

Like sweets are for us today, honey was a treat for the people who lived in Biblical times. They loved it. It reminded them of good days, of special occasions.

Please remember that they didn't have any sweets like we do today. No sweets at all. Now I know that my boys will think that a world without sweets will be a very sad place, but we need to remember that they didn't know any better. The closest thing they had to sweets was honey.

So if something was compared to honey, it had a very positive connotation.

In the book Judges, we read the story of Samson. Can you remember who he was? He was special. His mum dedicated him to God. He wasn't afraid of anything. A really strong guy!

So one day, Samson was walking along the road, just minding his own business, when a fierce lion stormed him! Now I know that I would have been super scared if it happened to me. But not Samson – nothing phased him. He killed the lion with his bare hands.

Then, when he walked along that same road again some time later, he saw that bees made a nest in the lion's carcass, so he took some of the honey they made and ate it. It was delicious!

So that gave him an idea. He made up a riddle. It went like this:

"Out of the eater comes something to eat.

Out of the strong comes something sweet."

Can you guess what it means?

You need to remember that nobody who tried to figure out what this riddle meant, saw the lion with the honey inside his carcass... Nobody

could get it right. They were so frustrated, that they tricked Samson into giving them the answer. Do you want to know what it was? It meant:

“What is sweeter than honey?

What is stronger than a lion?”

And up until this day THAT is an expression – “as sweet as honey”. In Afrikaans, my first language, the expression is “so soet soos stroop” – as sweet as syrup.

And it’s easy to see the connection, because honey and golden syrup look the same, and taste very similar too.

Does any of you like golden syrup? I love it! Golden syrup on pancakes, or even French toast, is my favourite breakfast!

Now I don’t know how attentive you are, but if you have ever bought Lyle’s golden syrup, you would see the following picture on the tin: A lion, surrounded by bees! And just listen to the inscription at the bottom: *Out of the strong came forth sweetness.*

Now well I never! Samson’s riddle! A Bible verse on the golden syrup tin! In 2020.

That’s quite cool, isn’t it?

And there are many more interesting and fun things that you can read about in the Bible!

We call the Bible “God’s Word” – because through the words in the Bible God speaks to us today.

God’s Word is as sweet as honey – it will cheer you up when you feel down, it will give you renewed energy if you feel tired, it will never cease to amaze you.

And no matter how many times you read the same story, you will always discover something new and meaningful in there – very often exactly what you needed to hear. And that is because when we read the Bible, God’s Spirit opens our eyes and our hearts to what he wants us to see...

So this summer – why don’t you try to read a whole book from the Bible? I guarantee you, you will not be disappointed.

If you thought eating sweets was fun... Wait till you’ve developed a taste for the Bible! God speaks to us through the Bible – so make sure to listen to his words, and see your life change for the better!

Amen

PRAYER

Written by Rev Alison Quilter

Lord God, we thank you for the world you created, the trees, the flowers, the rivers, the seas, the mountains and for all its beauty.

Loving God, we thank you for big books, little books, paperbacks, novels and picture books. Thank you for the gift of reading and for giving us

your amazing book, the Bible, which tells us of your love and other wonderful things to help us in our lives.

Father God, when we think of the 'church', we think of our own buildings, our own friends, those who worship with us now even though we can't be with them. Lord, when you see the church, you see Christians in every country spread across the world. Lord help us to see how great the church is; and to be glad that we belong to your family.

We also pray for people who help us in our lives too. For doctors and nurses and all who help in hospitals and care homes and those who help with the care of people in our communities. Thank you for policemen and policewomen who keep us safe. For firemen and -firewomen for their courage and their constant care. Thank you for our parents and teachers who give their time so that we may learn.

Thank you for those who are just loving people who help out when they can and for people at church that we can go to them for help when we are troubled.

Bless the leaders of the world today. Give them wisdom and understanding and the courage to say what they think is right. Help them in their decisions, so that this world in which we live can have peace and we can share and provide food and medicines to people who have none. There are so many lonely people in the world. Some of them are our neighbours – people of all ages, young and old. Help us to look out for anyone who may need friendship and think what we can do for them. Loving God, we pray for those people who we know are sick at home and in hospital. We ask that today each of them would be aware of your

love for them, and that they would turn to you for strength to face their sickness. Help them not to be unhappy because they are unwell, but to learn something special about you during this time.....

Please God, comfort those who are sad and grieving, and those who just don't know which way to turn. Give them courage to keep going although everything seems to be hopeless. Lord, when things go wrong it is then we realise we need you. You are our hope and strength. We pray that in their troubles and sadness more and more people will come to know your love and peace.

Loving God, guide us, teach us and strengthen us, so that we become gentle and kind like you and can work for you to tell everyone about how wonderful Jesus is and the amazing stories in the Bible. Loving God we ask that you hear these our prayers in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

HYMN: MP 167

Give me oil my lamp,
Keep me burning,
Give me oil in my lamp, I pray;
Give me oil my lamp,
Keep me burning,
Keep me burning till the break of day.

*Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the king!*

Make me a fisher of men,

Keep me seeking,
Make me a fisher of men, I pray;
Make me a fisher of men,
Keep me seeking,
Keep me seeking till the break of day.

Chorus

Give me joy in my heart,
Keep me singing,
Give me joy in my heart, I pray,
Give me joy in my heart,
Keep me singing,
Keep me singing till the break of day.

Chorus

Give me love in my heart,
Keep me serving,
Give me love in my heart, I pray;
Give me love in my heart,
Keep me serving,
Keep me serving till the break of day.

Chorus