



Pastor's Page

"A good sense of direction"

A friend of mine used to minister at a Baptist church in Skipton, the 'gateway to the Yorkshire dales.' He told me the story of an elderly couple from his church who went on holiday to the famous Lancashire seaside resort of Blackpool. Half way through the week, they came across a coach company that ran mystery tours with reduced rates for Senior citizens. Unable to resist, they booked themselves on, and with great anticipation, set off to an unknown destination. After a couple of hours sauntering through picturesque countryside they arrived at their mystery destination- Skipton!!! Not wishing to waste the opportunity, they nipped home, where she did some washing and he mowed the lawn before they hopped back on the coach to Blackpool!!!! (What a treat!!)

Knowing your destination makes a big difference to any journey. As I write this *Pastor's Page* I'm preparing to head North for a family wedding in Oldham (my niece's- bless her) and then on to North Wales to preach at a church Anniversary, before heading back to Birmingham for our evening service with the Canadian Students. It'll be a lot of travelling but it will be worth it because there's a clear and exciting purpose in view. If we're not sure in life where we are heading then knowing what we should be doing is almost impossible. One of the great phobias of people in the last Century, according to Paul Tillich, the German theologian, was "meaninglessness". There is something desperately sad about a person who has no purpose or direction in life. In contrast to this the Bible tells us that we were made on purpose for a purpose. It is I (God) who made the earth and created mankind upon it" (Isaiah 45:12) Aurelius Augustine, the great 4th century theologian phrased it like this; "For you (God) made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you" This life is no accident. This truth is in stark contrast to secular thinking, which says life is ultimately meaningless. Jean Paul Sartre the French existentialist philosopher said "*I come from nothing, I am nothing and I will go to nothing*" What a contrast to Jesus Christ who said; ***I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father (God) except through me***" (John 14:6) Jesus goes on to say in this same chapter of John that if we put our faith in Him we can be sure of our salvation and sure of our destination. The two things are inexorably linked; Jesus has opened up the way for us to have a relationship with our creator and he has opened up the way to heaven. John Stott comments; Nothing baffles us human beings more than nothingness and death. The angst of 20th century existentialists, is at its most acute, their dread of the abyss of nothingness. And death is the one event over which (in the end) we have no control, and from which we cannot escape....But nothingness and death are no problems to God. On the contrary, it is out of nothing that he created the universe and out of death that he raised Jesus. The creation and the resurrection were and remain the two major manifestations of the power of God.

So the Christian life is a journey with a *clear* purpose and a *sure* destination, and knowing where we are going makes a huge difference to how we live. The psalmist said "**Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and he will do this**" (Psalm 37:4-5) If we want to know God's guidance in our lives then we need to know and trust God's guide for our lives –Jesus Christ, the way the truth and the life – it's him that we follow. What's your sense of direction like?

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