

## **Every perfect Gift is from above.**

(07/10/2018)

I decided to go sailing on Wednesday morning. My holidays were drawing to a close and the weather forecast promised a pleasant sailing experience. Please come with me, if you like, but let me first describe to you my sailing boat before you step in and take a seat. It's a mere eleven feet long, forty-eight years old, very comfortable for one person, but not so comfortable when seating two. By nine-thirty Wednesday morning I had launched the small boat in the Cabbage Tree Creek at Shorncliffe. A gentle, favourable wind prevailed that would hopefully carry me into Moreton Bay towards my destination. My intentions were to sail eleven kilometres to Woody Point. Upon arrival enjoy a nice lunch there and then sail back to Shorncliffe. I discovered that my sailing journey provided some wonderful insights for our journey with God.

My journey began well, albeit slowly. A gentle wind carried me past the shores of Shorncliffe, but then the wind departed and calmness arrived. A sailing boat needs wind to move and during the next fifteen minutes of quiet time I recorded my first observation. Just like a sailor stuck in a boat without the wind, in the same way a human being is confined to a certain position without God. God's Holy Spirit is often described as a wind and no doubt we all remember how the disciples were amazed that Jesus possessed power over the wind and the waves. Without God's Holy Spirit we remain stationary. We may be very busy, but we remain stuck in our little boat up the creek.

Christians also can encounter times when there appears to be a lack of favourable winds. We seem to be getting nowhere. Nothing is happening. God is quiet and yet we have so many unanswered questions..... "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding." These words can bring comfort and hope to us during extended quiet times, especially when we struggle with a difficult problem. It was often during my quiet times when I was blessed with valuable insights which God provided. Quiet times can be a precious gift from God. Quiet times can contain blessings that enrich our lives like dark clouds filled with rain enriching our garden. During busy times, well I was often too busy to listen, too busy doing stuff. Over the years I've come to appreciate and treasure these quiet times which God has provided.

But let us return to the boat. Stuck in the creek without wind, the incoming tide, I discovered, was slowly carrying me back towards my starting point. I wonder if without God we too are going backwards. All our human efforts, without God, are just that, ... human efforts. These human efforts and I don't underestimate the wonderful human efforts made over the centuries, though very important, these are not God's efforts through us. Our world will not last. God is on a rescue mission. It is a divine effort that Jesus seeks to achieve through us. Isn't that why we pray ... "thy will be done on earth as in heaven" ?

Finally a gentle easterly wind arrived and carried me towards the Shorncliffe Pier. My depth sounder indicated that the sailing dinghy was in very shallow waters, missing hazardous rocks by mere centimetres. I can think of many occasions over the past years when God has protected me or my wife Eileen from danger. Often we realised it only much later that God had guided us safely through difficult circumstances. I'm sure you can think of many occasions where God's hand has guided you safely through a difficult situation. God's care for us is confirmed in many passages of the Bible and here is one from Psalm 34:19 "A righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all."

The easterly wind that arrived, carrying me safely over the shallows, was not the kind of wind I was hoping for, because it propelled me into the wrong direction. My plan was to sail to Woody Point, not to Brighton. Again, I learned something at this point. God loves us and he will carry us along His path of righteousness, for His sake and for ours. We are on a pilgrimage and only God knows our destination. So when your plans, or mine, don't come to fruition, it is good for us to remember that God loves us so very much, that He gave His only Son Jesus Christ to save us, to be our Lord and Shepherd. Remembering this may help us to surrender our plans and humbly accept God's perfect one. "Thy will be done." That will always be the blessed plan for you and me, because as today's Bible reading from Job reminds us, "the evil one is prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." We are in a spiritual battle and have very limited spiritual vision. This is why Jesus said "I am the way, and the Truth, and the Life."

A favourable wind of around fifteen knots finally arrived and carried me swiftly to Woody Point. With the little boat anchored close to the shore I proceeded to a restaurant to enjoy a delicious lunch. The wind that carried me home in the afternoon had increased and the return journey was very speedy. Sometimes I close my eyes as I sail along and I can hear the waves talking as the boat glides through the water. The rudder begins to "talk" when the boat speed exceeds 2.5 knots, but it is the voice of the wind that can be heard so much clearer when I close my eyes. It is again a reminder how with closed eyes our vision improves. When we pray to God, when we listen to Him, make known to Him with thanksgiving our requests, we will be blessed with a peace that will surpass all human understanding. We are God's children. Jesus is God's precious gift to us, our Shepherd who guides us safely to His precious destination. The Gospel reading today reminds us to accept this gift like a child and to treasure it for a lifetime. James reminds us in his letter that "Every perfect gift is from above, the Father of the Heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

So, as you journey through the coming week, perhaps not in your sailing dinghy, but in your car, on your bike or simply walking, stop and close your eyes from time to time and listen to the wind, listen to God and hear His words to you .... I love you my dear child, you are mine and I will not leave you as orphans.... And may the peace of God, who transcends all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen