

Sunday 29 August 2021
Glynde Lutheran Church
Sermon on Revelation 2:18-29
Theme: “Marching to a different drum”
“Whose drum are you marching to?”

Introduction:

Do you remember those old American Revolution movies, where the Americans who were fighting for their independence from the British would march into battle to the beat of a drum, a drum beat that is being rapped out by the drummer at the head of the advancing column. As I remember it, there were different beats by the drummer to indicate different movements. So, there were different drum beats for “advance”, “charge”, “retreat”, and so on....

This morning, our theme is: “Marching to a different drum”, or more fully, “Marching to the tune of a different drummer”. I’ll explain this as I go on. But basically, this morning, I want us all to undertake a spiritual stocktake of our life, as we ask ourselves again and again the question, “Whose drum am I marching to?”

Most people in our society are marching to the tune of popular opinion. Most people live their life according to what society says is OK.

Can you see the drummer of popular opinion marching out ahead of a massive crowd of people, as they march through life? Most people around us, *and that includes most of our friends, our relatives, and our neighbours*, decide what is right and wrong according to what the drummer of popular opinion is beating out with regard to particular issues.

They ask themselves:

“What will I do in this particular situation?”

And they make a decision based on thinking that goes something like this: **“Well, what do most people say is OK?”** **“What do my friends think is the right thing to do?”**

Most people around us decide what is right and wrong according to what the drummer of popular opinion is beating out.

We, who are God's children *through our baptism and our faith in Jesus as our Saviour*, though, are called to march to a different drum, to the tune of a different drummer, *namely the tune that our Lord Jesus beats out*.

Now, it's not easy doing that in our society: it is not easy marching through life to the tune of a different drummer. Imagine the scene in one of those American Revolution movies, where most of the soldiers are advancing forward at a fast pace, because they are listening to a drummer who is drumming out "advance", and also see in your mind's eye some soldiers trying to go back in the other direction, because they are listening to a different drummer, a drummer who is drumming out the beat for "retreat". It is certainly not easy marching to the tune of a different drummer....

The Christians at Thyatira in the first century after Jesus lived were finding this out first hand. The city of Thyatira was a thriving trade centre with many trade guilds: there were guilds for potters, cobblers, tanners, weavers, and so on. And each guild had its own so-called "god".

This presented quite a problem for the Christians there: because if they wanted to keep their job, they were expected to be a member of a trade guild and attend its feasts and its parties. At these feasts, there would be food served that had been offered to the particular "god" of that guild, and after the feast, there would be sexual immorality, *people carrying on sexually with one another*.

So, Christians in Thyatira were faced with all sorts of problems living in that society: if they didn't go to these feasts, they might lose their job, and if they went and walked out, they would be ridiculed and persecuted by those around them.

Listen, now, again to the first part of what the risen, exalted Lord Jesus had to say to the Christians there, through the apostle John:

This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes blaze like fire, whose feet shine like polished brass. I know what you do. I know your love, your faithfulness, your service, and your patience. I know that you are doing more now than you did at first.

But this is what I have against you: you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a messenger of God. By her teaching, she misleads my servants into practising sexual immorality and eating food that has been offered to idols (Rev. 2:18-20).

Now, we don't know for sure what this modern day Jezebel was saying to the Christians in Thyatira. But we can guess:

Perhaps she told them that she had the answer to their dilemma as to whether they should drop out of the guilds and thus lose their jobs and suffer hunger and persecution, or *whether they should* remain in the guilds and take part in their unchristian activities. Perhaps she counselled them to stay in the guilds and take part in the feasts and immoralities. This, she *maybe* said would make them stronger Christians. 'In fact', she may have said, 'If you're really going to fight sin, you've got to experience it' (*Esther Onstad, Courage for today, p. 21*).

The Church in Thyatira was aware of this woman's teaching, but they did nothing about it. And this is what Jesus has against them: that they were tolerating her teaching that they should do what those around them were doing.

Instead, Jesus says to them, "hold firmly to what you have" (*Rev. 2:25*). In other words, Jesus is saying to the Christians in Thyatira:

"Go on marching to the beat of my drum, and don't listen to those who would drum out a different beat!".

You know, we in Australia live in a similar situation to those Christians in Thyatira. There are many around us, *and even in our churches at times*, who beat out a different drum beat to that of our Lord Jesus.

There was a time in Australia when the drummer of popular opinion beat out a similar beat to that of our Lord Jesus. Not that long ago, perhaps 50 years ago or so, Australia was largely Christian, and its values were largely influenced by Christian values. But it certainly isn't that way these days....

Let me give you a few examples, just quickly, of how the drum beat of popular opinion has changed in the last half century or so:

* **"It is possible to know truth through God's Son, Jesus"**

versus

**"There is no such thing as absolute truth. All truth is relative".
In other words, "you decide what is right or wrong".**

* **"Religion is the backbone of Australian society"**

versus

"Religion is of little value, except for the weak minded"

- * **“Human life from conception until natural death is precious and to be protected at all costs”**

versus

“Human life, which begins and ends when we decide it does, is valuable as long as it is wanted”

- * **“The institution of marriage is God-ordained and occurs between a man and a woman until death severs the bond”**

versus

“Marriage is a human contract between any two people, and either party can terminate it for any reason”

- * **“Same-sex and bisexual intercourse are immoral”**

versus

“All forms and combinations of sexual activity are moral as long as they occur between consenting parties” (*William Watkins, The New Absolutes, p. 45*).

Well, I said that this morning we would undertake a spiritual stocktake of our life.

I want to ask you now a series of questions for you to answer. The answers that you give will indicate to you “whose drum you are marching to”, whether you are marching to the drummer of popular opinion or whether you are marching to the drummer who is your Lord Jesus.

Well, let me ask you some questions for yourself, so that you can gain an indication of which drummer you are following:

- * **“Your friend says, ‘I didn’t realise that anyone took that religion stuff seriously these days. It’s so old fashioned’. What do you say?”**
- * **“All your friends have lovely houses and great toys to play with, and spend their life working to pay for them. But you know that Jesus said, ‘Don’t store up riches for yourselves here on earth’. What do you do?”**
- * **“You see pictures on TV of children starving in Africa, but your friends say that any money that is given to them is wasted anyway. What do you do?”**
- * **“A friend at work obviously needs someone to talk to him and to help him, but you’re busy, and well most people won’t have**

anything to do with him. What do you do?”

- * “You are really hurt by what someone says to you. Do you get your own back on her, as your friend says you should, or do you try to love her and forgive her?” What do you do?
- * “A friend is pregnant, and she asks you whether she should have an abortion. What do you say?”
- * “A friend says to you that it’s O.K. to ‘sleep around’ prior to marriage. What do you say?”

I could go on and on asking questions like this.

Which drummer are *you* following in your life: “the drummer of popular opinion, or the drummer who is your Lord Jesus?”

Giving into popular opinion is to do what God wants you *not* to do: because following following popular opinion rather than what God wants you to do can cause hurt and harm to you and those around you. That’s why God tells us to go a particular way: for our good, and the good of the people around us whom He loves, and for the good of people everywhere whom He loves.

Furthermore, it is dangerous to your faith and my faith in Jesus as our Saviour to follow the opinions of this world rather than the words of our Lord, Jesus. It is dangerous to your faith and my faith in Jesus as our Saviour to say “Yes” to sin and “No” to God (*cf. Colin Buchanan’s song, “Practise being Godly”*).

You may think to yourself,

“Oh well, God will forgive me.... That’s His business!”

And it’s true.... God will forgive you, when you come to Him and humbly ask Him to forgive you for Jesus’ sake. But it *is* dangerous to your faith to say “No” to God, and “Yes” to sin....

Let me give you an illustration that I often use in this regard. Imagine holding on to Jesus’ garment as you walk behind him in his footsteps. That’s a good picture, I think, of what faith is: it is holding onto Jesus as our Saviour, and trying to follow Jesus in the way that we live our life.

If you say “No” to God and “Yes” to popular opinion, it’s like walking away from Jesus in another direction to the one that he’s going in.

The danger in doing this is that you will lose hold of Jesus as your Saviour, or even no longer want to hold on to Jesus as your Saviour

Conclusion:

Let’s pray. I invite you to join with me in a prayer of confession. I invite you to pray this prayer quietly with me, as I pray it aloud:

“Dear God, please forgive me for the times when I’ve listened to and followed the drummer of popular opinion. Forgive me for Jesus’ sake.

Forgive me, dear Father, and help me and empower me to follow the drum beat of my Lord Jesus in all that I do”.

And be assured that you are forgiven by God as you call out to God in Jesus’ name for forgiveness. And be assured that God will give you His Spirit to empower you to follow Jesus in your life, *as you ask Him for help and power.*