

## On Course Arch Chater

It is good to see you all here at this meeting this morning, having safely arrived. I think I could vouch that none of you got lost on the way here. You knew the way and you arrived here safely. It is this matter of staying on course and reaching the destination safely that I briefly want to speak about this morning. Our Lord and Saviour has set a course for us to follow through this life. It is the same course for all, the same destination and to stay on that course will see us reach our destination, the Heavenly Caanan.

God says in Ps 32:8 "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye." God is saying "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over your progress." He has a direction for us to follow that leads to life eternal and we need to stay on that course or can be forever lost.

I'll tell you a story of a sea gull that got off course and was lost and nearly didn't reach his destination.

I often walk to the Headland at Pt Cartwright close to where I live and spend time looking down on the surf and out to sea enjoying God's handiwork. This particular morning, I noticed a sea gull, a type of sea gull - a tern, which seemed to be floundering amongst the rocks and waves. It struggled onto a boulder only to be washed back into the sea. This occurred several times and I realised the bird was in trouble. To my mind it appeared that the bird had departed from its migratory course and became lost. I hurried down the hillside and struggled out through the rocks and waded out to the bird. I cupped the sea gull in my hands. It did not appreciate my actions and endeavoured to peck and bite me. I carried the bird home, cupped in my hands. I used the hair-dryer to dry the bird and then placed it in a cardboard box out in the sun. I had a tin of sardines, which I opened and fed the bird. I left the bird there for the rest of the day, out in the sun. Late afternoon, on looking at the bird, it appeared to have recovered dramatically, so I decided to take the bird back to where I found it and release it. Finding a large boulder close to the water's edge, I took the lid off the box and immediately the bird saw the sky. It jumped and perched on the edge of the box. It remained there several moments and then turned its head toward me and looked at me for several seconds, as if to say "thank-you" then opening its wings, it

took off out to sea in a north-easterly direction. The bird flew only metres above the waves and flew very fast and it was obvious it was heading back on course. There were no other birds in sight. I intended to watch it until it was out of sight. I backed up the hillside. The bird flew straight, never varying off course and was flying at great speed and I watched it for quite a while till it was out of sight. It was obvious to me that the bird was back on course again.

I got to thinking how do birds navigate across thousands of miles of land and sea and stay on course without a compass or a chart and arrive at their destination safely. I remember reading some years ago that scientists at the Institute of Marine Biology did studies and found that a pigeon placed in a large circular cage with identical food bowls spaced evenly around the periphery of the cage could be trained to go to a food cup in a particular direction provided the pigeon could see the sun. If the sun's apparent position was altered by the placement of mirrors, the pigeon's choice of food cup was correspondingly altered showing that the pigeon used the sun to determine direction.

Experiments also proved that when there was no sun (overcast day) the pigeon could navigate by the earth's magnetic field. Small magnetic bars were attached to the wings of a group of pigeons and similar non-magnetic brass bars were attached to the wings of another group of pigeons. Both groups were released together from an unfamiliar site on a very overcast day. The pigeons with the magnets attached to their wings became disorientated and lost whereas the other group headed straight for home. When the sun was shining, the birds' navigational mechanism prioritised the sun. When the sun was obscured, the birds' navigational mechanism relied on the earth's magnetic field.

Friends the wonderful mechanism of navigation, given the birds by God, led them safely to their destination provided that their God-given mechanism stayed in tact and attuned to God and His provisions. Over thousands of miles of land and sea, daylight or darkness, God led the birds to their safe destination.

Friends, we are also travelling – travelling through life to our destination, sometimes with dark days to the Heavenly Canaan. Our Lord and Saviour has been over the course and charted it. He will navigate each one who has chosen to follow Him.

Through the power of God's Holy Spirit, God will guide each one of us to the Heavenly Canaan provided our eyes are not taken off the Son, Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness and provided we do not allow ourselves to become deceived by the mirrors of men who would misrepresent the Son –

- Rom.1.3 - The Son who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh who took upon Himself man's fallen nature -He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in the likeness of sinful mind.
- Phil 2:4 - "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus
- Col 1:27 - "Christ in you – the hope of glory."
- Heb 4:15 – Christ was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;
- Christ overcame in the power of God;
- Christ came as our example to follow;
- This shows us that the new birth puts men in the same position that Christ occupied on this earth.

Also may we not lose our way and direction by attaching to our lives the magnets of sin. As the pigeons were deceived and lost by mirrors and magnets, likewise we also can lost our way and be lost by allowing ourselves to accept deception, error and sin into our lives. Whilst we allow the true Navigator Jesus to chart our course, we can never be lost. So let us be like the Bereans of old, scrutinising the course that we might be sure that we are on that course Jesus has left us to follow and not travelling another for the course and pathway of error lays very close to that of truth.

Also friends, like the seagull, which was helped find its direction again after being off course, struggling for its life amid the rocks and waves, so a helping hand from a friend can also set a troubled traveller back on course and headed for the safe destination.

Let us study and follow closely the true course Jesus has set for us. For He is the only Navigator to follow wherein there is surety of reaching the safe destination.