

## Newsletter August 1st, 2021

### Sunday's Readings: John 6:22-58

### Ps. Andrew Everson will bring us the word this week

#### Some Prayers of the people

- Please pray for the Barnabas Fund as they work worldwide to distribute food and medical aid to Christians in impoverished conditions.
- Pray for our country, particularly the people of NSW and Sydney in particular as they battle with new outbreaks of Covid19.
- Continue to pray for our Governments across Australia. Pray for wisdom and cooperation in dealing with this developing epidemic and the economic and social fall out.
- Pray for our Christian community as we continue to witness to Christ in these times,

## Notices

**Sunday School:** School and Youth Alpha course recommences

**Fundraiser:** Due to covid19 the TL2 lunch is cancelled and will be rescheduled at a later date.

**Church Service:** Due to Covid 19 the guidelines for Sunday are as follows.

- Masks must be worn
- 1 person/ 4 square meters of space. So, we can have 50 in the church and 40 in the hall
- No congregational singing. But we can have the singers at the front.
- Unfortunately, No morning Tea.

**Tarooki:** Please join us to celebrate 61 years of camping in Robe. Onsite at 55 Main St. Robe on Sunday November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at 10.30am for a Thanksgiving Service followed by a catered lunch.

RSVP to [tarooki@uvsa.org.au](mailto:tarooki@uvsa.org.au) or 0429157270 by November 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Dan Fennell** has written a book “The World of the Word. Discipleship from Moab to Macedonia” and it is available to purchase for \$15.00. If you would like a copy, please contact Teresa or Dan (jdfennell98@gmail.com or phone 0413660092)

**Updates:** There are forms at the back of the church to update any changes of details or for new members to fill in for name tags and to receive our newsletter by email.

If you have any news you wish to share, please let us know so we may celebrate or pray and offer support for you.

## **Midweek Bible reading:**

### ***Ephesians 4:1-16***

#### **Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ**

<sup>4</sup> As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,  
he took many captives  
and gave gifts to his people.”

<sup>9</sup> (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) <sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows, and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Paul is writing to the Ephesians from prison in Rome, and he starts this series of thoughts by highlighting this fact – he is “a prisoner **for** the Lord”. In the previous chapter he starts with the words “... I, Paul, the prisoner **of** Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles.” Why?

Paul is both a prisoner **of** Christ and **for** Christ. He knows that his life is constrained by Christ, he is owned by Christ, his thoughts and prayers, purpose and destiny are directed towards Christ – even if this means prison. This is serious stuff. And in this spirit of serious commitment, he urges Christ’s followers to be likewise committed to a life shaped by Jesus Christ.

This is the commitment of an individual Christian, but it is commitment to a way of living that is totally outwardly focussed.

We can’t be humble, gentle, forbearing or loving on our own. We require a community to be humble, gentle, forbearing and loving towards. So, Paul is calling for this response, not as a kind of inwardly directed religion, but to love, forbearance, and forgiveness directed outwards to others.

<sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Paul emphasises that the Christian community that lives in this way forms a unity. It’s not a unity formed by simply being of one set of opinions. It’s a unity of being “in Christ” and continuously being moulded into the kind of person and community that reflects Christ. The life and expression of such a community form a oneness that comes from God... “one body...one Spirit...one hope...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all!”

This is not privatised religion, nor is it the exaltation of the individual as an individual, it is the lifting up of the individual to be in community with others, and in communion with our sovereign, transcendent, God. (“...the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe...”).

The grounds for our commitment, and the grace that empowers our response, is that the Christians of Ephesus (and we too) have been **called** by God. God calls us into community with him and with each other and gives us the grace to respond.

“<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.”

So, here is the other side of the coin. The Christian community, the church, forms a community that is called by God and directed towards unity, with each member committed to each other. But the gifts and graces that Christ through the Holy Spirit gives to each of us are not all the same.

In his letter to the Romans (Rom 12) and the first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12) Paul talks about the gifts that the Holy Spirit distributes among us for the benefit of his church – and that is a wide range of gifts. But in this letter Paul emphasises the importance of the gifts that we associate with church ministry. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers all have specific gifts of bringing God’s word to people to “prepare God’s people for works of service” and to build up the church in faith, and knowledge, and maturity, “attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ”.

Paul draws out the reasons that sound teaching is important for the church. It is important so that we are not deceived by false teaching, it is important for growth, it is important for unity, and it is important so that we can grow to be more Christ like. The alternative is continuing immaturity (as “infants”) and instability, and a tendency to be easily deceived and distracted, “blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people...”

We must “speak the truth in love”. Now that’s a tough ask. It doesn’t mean compromising the gospel or God’s word in anyway, but it does mean we need to love – that is we need to communicate with the best of intentions and with genuine love for those we speak to and with. We need to listen to God, and we need to listen to others in order to respond winsomely and respectfully. We need to be brave enough to risk being misunderstood and being rejected – even by those who would be our friends in Christ.

It's a tough ask, but again we do this only through Christ. It is Christ himself who holds the whole thing together, working through the gifts and graces that he has given, and that he empowers and allows to do their work:

<sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows, and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.