

## Newsletter August 8th, 2021

### Sunday's Readings: Psalm 25

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

#### Some Prayers of the people

- Please continue to pray for the work the Barnabas Fund do as they work in Myanmar, Nigeria Afghanistan Algeria to name a few of the countries where they help persecuted Christians.
- Pray for our country as we battle with new outbreaks of Covid19. Also, for those whom the restrictions have been very difficult.
- Pray for those who are unwell, undergoing tests or hospitalised may God's peace and his healing hand be on them.
- Pray for the Cooke family as they mourn the loss of their Father and Grandfather and Great Grandfather. Our love and thoughts are with them at this time.

#### Notices

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

Masks must be worn

1/2m<sup>2</sup> distancing applies (**101** persons in the church so we may not need the hall, although that will be available)

No Singing except by the worship team

No morning Tea

Sunday school and Youth Alpha is on!

**Barnabas Fund:** Prayer Focus Update is a monthly information bulletin with up-to-date news on the persecuted Church to help Christians pray for their suffering brothers and sisters. You can use this for prayer groups, your own information and for inclusion in church magazines.

It is available in various formats on the [Barnabas Fund website](http://bfaustralia@barnabasfund.org) (bfaustralia@barnabasfund.org) or can be sent through the post free of charge. Please [contact](#) your national Barnabas Fund office(1300365799 or 0738061076) for more information.

**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>.

**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 4:22 -5:2**

<sup>22</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

<sup>25</sup> Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. <sup>26</sup> "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil a foothold. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

**5** <sup>1</sup> Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup> and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**The Australian Sunrise – James Cuthbertson (1851-1910)**

Imagine yourself standing on the coast somewhere along the Great Ocean Road or perhaps at the Glenelg River estuary where James Cuthbertson liked to fish. There are stars and constellations in the sky – the Southern Cross and the Scorpion, and the day is about to break: -

The Morning Star paled slowly, the Cross hung low to the sea,  
And down the shadowy reaches the tide came swirling free,  
The lustrous purple blackness of the soft Australian night,  
Waned in the grey awakening that heralded the light;  
Still in the dying darkness, still in the forest dim  
The pearly dew of the dawning clung to each giant limb,  
Till the sun came up from the ocean, red with the cold sea mist,  
And smote on the limestone ridges, and the shining tree-tops kissed;  
Then the fiery Scorpion vanished, the magpie's note was heard,  
And the wind in the she-oak wavered, and the honeysuckles stirred,  
The airy golden vapour rose from the river breast,  
The kingfisher came darting out of his crannied nest,  
And the bulrushes and reed-beds put off their sallow grey  
And burnt with cloudy crimson at the dawning of the day.

Becoming a Christian is like that. It is like the sun coming up. There is tingling anticipation, a stirring of the Holy Spirit as darkness is pushed aside. Life and freedom, release from all sorts of stuff that has attempted to weigh us down and break us. The Holy Spirit cuts through all that and God's light puts everything into clarity.

In the Bible passage above Paul writes that we put off our old self and we put on our new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. This is the New Creation. This is Genesis 1:26-27 repeated. We are created again; recreated in the true image of God. The righteousness we are given is God's. We are set apart for God, by God. That's what holiness is.

Like the bulrushes and the reed beds putting off their sallow grey and burning with cloudy crimson light as the sun rises. It is not our light; it is God's light that lightens us.

In the reading above Paul lists out six areas of our lives that will reflect God's holiness and righteousness, areas in which we will be simply good, like God. This is not an exhaustive list and there are lots more examples in the rest of Ephesians, but they are attitudes to living that are indicative of living in the light. They are areas in which the Holy Spirit is working in us, in Paul's words in Eph 4:12-13:

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.

The first is that we must speak truthfully to each other. We must not mislead people. This is foundational. God is a God of truth. God doesn't tell lies and our lives will only have integrity if people can trust what we say. Christianity is relational. We have a foundational relationship with God, and we have a relationship with other people. To have any integrity our relationships need to be honest and open, without guile. Paul puts this into the context of us all as members of the body of Christ, the church. We are together, one body, with one truth.

The second thing that Paul mentions is anger. He writes "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold".

He doesn't say never get angry. There is a whole heap of stuff that happens in the world that if it didn't get you angry, people might wonder whether you were fair dinkum or not. We know that God's righteous

anger is aroused against evil. We know that Jesus himself got angry at the money changes desecrating the temple and Jesus showed anger in the synagogue of Capernaum. When Jesus asked them if it was right to heal on the Sabbath and they refused to answer, Mark's gospel tells us: "he looked around at them in anger, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts".

But God's anger is, and Christ's anger is, controlled in a direct and truthful response to evil. We read that God is slow to anger and his actions are always directed towards what is right.

But when we get angry that is not always the case.

James 1:21-22 reads:

<sup>19</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup> because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

So, get angry, but don't sin. Don't let anger take hold of you in such a way that whatever you are angry about makes you respond in a way that is not Godly or not helpful. And deal with your anger quickly. Because our anger and our brooding over things, and particularly things that people do and say that make us angry can become an idol in itself and then this begins to define us and take the place of God. This is giving the Devil a foothold.

The best response is to give the issue to God. Get the anger under control and deal with the issue only after we are then clear about what would be most helpful and life affirming.

Paul's third point is about stealing. He says that anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer but must do some useful work for themselves and have something to share with people in need. I am not going to go into all the ways in which people can steal from each other. I just like it that Paul makes it clear that becoming a Christian is not just for law abiding, outwardly respectable citizens. It's for thieves and other scoundrels. It's for all of us sinners.

When we become Christians, a transformation happens in which people, like us, who focus mostly on themselves, increasingly see themselves as in relationship with others – with God and with other people. To use the metaphor again, we see ourselves and we see other people clearly when the sun comes up and God's daylight arrives.

The fourth point that Paul makes is about what we say and how we say it. We are to watch what we say. We are to watch what we say and how we say it because our focus is now on building others up.

In the letter of James chapter 3, the writer makes a similar point:

<sup>9</sup> With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup> Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be!

And it is a real trap that people, who have been gifted with an ability to speak and communicate, can easily fall into. The more articulate we are with words, and the easier it is for us to speak, then the greater is the temptation to use the tongue as a weapon – not in this case for building others up according to their needs, and not to benefit to those who listen, as Paul encourages us to do.

The Holy Spirit gives the gifts we have, including the gift to communicate and Paul notes as his fifth point that when we misuse our gifts or when we act to contradict the leading of the Holy Spirit, we cause him grief. God is Spirit, but God is not a remote being without emotion. With God it is upfront and personal so when we fail to act in ways that honour the image in which he has made us, and, remade us, (giving us his Holy Spirit as a down payment on eternal life with him), he grieves.

So, Paul writes:

“<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice”.

And finally, he writes:

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

The greatest gift that the Holy Spirit gives us is the power to forgive. Just as God forgives us. This is Christianity's heart. This is the earth shattering, life changing gift that Jesus Christ brought new to the world – forgiveness.

This isn't a forgiveness that refuses to see evil as just that – evil. This isn't a forgiveness that doesn't seek to change circumstances and practices and people from wickedness to Godliness. But it **is** a forgiveness that is given unilaterally, freely, and sometimes at great cost.

This is grace.

Andrew