

BANYULE BABBLE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGLICAN PARISH OF BANYULE

HOLY SPIRIT WATSONIA ❖ ST ANDREW'S ROSANNA ❖ ST JOHN'S HEIDELBERG

APRIL
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DENISE'S DATELINE

A Resurrection Faith

HAPPY EASTER to you all!

What a joy to be able to meet in person for our celebrations of the most important festival of our Christian faith, Easter. The events of Holy Week leading up to Good Friday and Easter day are indeed the focal point for Christians around the world. The events of that first Easter are foundational for our faith in God, for without the events of Easter day, ALL other aspects of the Christian faith crumble in pointlessness. If Jesus was not raised from death, then he was just another good (or perhaps deluded) teacher of morality.

Indeed, all the events of the life of Jesus, of God's promises to his people through the Old Testament, of our Christian worship, only have meaning because of the Resurrection. The joys of Christmas, where we proclaim in word and song 'Emanuel, God with us', are can only be true through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the son of God, from the dead. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is only possible through the resurrected Son of God, who promises the Spirit and sends the Spirit to the followers of Jesus. The witness of the apostles and the growth of the Church; being able to pray to God as 'Our Father', all these are possible only because of Jesus' resurrection from death.

As St Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, '*...if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*' 1 Cor 15:17-19

In my reading of Hebrews this morning, these verses about the Lord Jesus Christ's death on that first Good Friday struck me afresh:

Jesus was "...for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, ¹² saying, 'I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.' Hebrews 2:9-12 (my emphasis)

The Risen Lord Jesus, crowned by God the Father with glory and honour because of his sacrificial death on the cross, in not ashamed of us, his followers, and he is pleased for call us his brothers and sisters! We are children of God through Jesus' death and resurrection – the event of Easter are THE basis of our faith; without the resurrection, there is no Christian faith.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ on that first Easter Day gives meaning to the lives of all Christians. Whether we are well or ill, young or old, happy or depressed, rich or poor, we have a Lord who has walked through all human life and even conquered death itself – and this Lord calls us his sisters and brothers, walks with us through all our lives and will bring us safely to God.

The solemn sadness of Good Friday is answered by the cheerful celebration of Easter Day: Hallelujah! He is Risen!

— Denise



Holy Week and Easter

We start on the very first day of April with *Maundy Thursday* and our remembrance of the Last Supper in a service at 7 pm at Holy Spirit Watsonia.

Then the next day comes the horror of *Good Friday*, commemorated at 10.15 am at St Andrew's Rosanna.

Then on the 4th we rejoice to celebrate *Easter Day* at 10.15 am at St John's Heidelberg. We'll try to remember that the clocks go back that day!

There'll be another combined service at St John's on Sunday 18th. That day we'll get to meet Rowan!

Hi, I'm Laura Wines!

I started doing admin work for the Banyule Parish last month and I am slowly working it out (with a few printing mishaps along the way).

I attend the evening service at St Mark's Camberwell and enjoy going along to our young adults' Bible study on Monday nights as well as helping out with our youth group.

I am a third year science student at Melbourne University, majoring in genetics. During my spare time I enjoy playing netball and baking desserts or sweets. My family recently got chickens so I've also been having fun watching them run around our yard.



mainly music: April 2021

We have been unable to recruit more team members for Heidelberg so, like Rosanna, we are putting it 'on hold'. Everything is there for its resurrection within two years should that be possible. I propose to have a 'gathering' as we did before Christmas, just to say goodbye.

Watsonia has settled and we are able to offer the Heidelberg families a place on a Thursday morning should they wish to accept. For some it will not be the right day and others will not wish to travel 'that far', so I would not expect more than 50% up-take. Still, it is good to offer it. We have existed on weekly emails for 12 months, but things cannot continue like this because it is not really helping the families, simply keeping their interest ... perhaps.

Rosemary Bellair (9459 5394)

This Month – April

Thursday 1st Maundy Thursday: 7 pm Holy Spirit

Friday 2nd Good Friday: 10.15 am St Andrew's
Genesis 22:1–18; John 19:16–42

Saturday 3rd: 8 am Blokes Helping Blokes breakfast at Macleod Community Hall

Sunday 4th Easter Day, Daylight Saving ends: 10.15 am St John's
Colossians 3:1–7; John 20:1–10; Hymn to the risen Christ

Wednesday 7th: 11 am Iris Grange; 3.30 pm Strathalan

Sunday 11th Easter 1: 9 am St Andrew's; 10.15 am St John's; 5 pm Holy Spirit
1 John 5:4–12; John 20:19–23

Sunday 18th Easter 2: 10.15 am Combined at St John's: Rowan preaching on Indonesia
Ephesians 4:7–16; John 15:1–11

Sunday 25th Easter 3, Anzac Day: 9 am St Andrew's; 10.15 am St John's; 5 pm Holy Spirit
Micah 4.1–4; Psalm 46; Romans 5.1–8; John 15.9–17

Wednesday 28th: 10 am Holy Spirit Mothers' Union; 11 am Streeton Park and general mid-week service at St John's; 3.30 pm Regis Macleod

Wanted

- More churchwardens

Money: February

Income:	Giving:	\$6,394.45
	Other:	\$16,408.85
	Total:	\$22,803.30
Expenses:		\$22,592.52
Surplus:		\$210.78

Giving was down. We had to pay our clergy in February.

Holy Spirit Mothers' Union

Wednesday 24th February was our first official meeting for 2021. Our meeting started as usual at 10 am with a cuppa (bought from a local coffee shop) with one of Beth's wrapped biscuits from Alders. Elizabeth led our MU Service. We started with singing 'Shine Jesus Shine', Val read the Bible reading from *The Word for Today*, then we all took it in turns to read a verse from the MU Service Book.

Many thanks, Beth, for baking our Mothering Sunday Simnel cake.

Lady Day (25th March) service will be at St Paul's, combined with St Paul's Choral Evensong at the Cathedral at 5 pm.

Elsie did a short talk on James Holden, (the man Holden cars were called after). Someone tells me you can find him on Google.

Our meeting ended with Midday Prayers.

Next Meeting will be on Wednesday 24th March at 10 am. We'll be working out our finances.

Elsie Storr

Blokes Helping Blokes

March's meeting returned to the tried and true staple of bacon and eggs that most blokes wish they had every morning.

The living eulogies will be restarting soon, but for the present Glenn got members to write a bit about themselves on a form, and then after breakfast he read from a few and we had to guess who they were, by which method we found we knew less about our fellow Blokes than we thought, and we learnt something new about them.

Frank, our resident teller of dodgy jokes, was rewarded after telling another one, by getting a ride home with the Editor in his ancient Laser. He needed this because his new Godfather-type dark glasses meant it was not his style not to be chauffeured. Nothing fell off the car this time (though the suspension sounds like it will), but Frank kept saying he really didn't need to get any closer, and here would do nicely, thank you; but the Editor insisted. When the Editor finally threw out the anchor in front of Frank's house, Frank got out rather hurriedly, possibly to change his underwear.

The next *Blokes Helping Blokes* breakfast will be at 8 am on 3rd April, at (God willing) Macleod Community Hall, just opposite the station, on the east (shops) side. We know this is the Easter long weekend, but this year none of the Blokes have been able to book into the overseas Mediterranean resorts they would normally be found in at this time. *Mr April* is 'home-made Hot Cross Buns, cooked in a wood-fired oven'. *Mr May* will be David Woods, *Mr June* will be David Fitzgerald. Please let Glenn know if you are coming, to help with catering: 0487 852 808. All blokes welcome!

There is a special extra on 1st May: a working bee at St Andrew's to deal with some trees, starting at 11 am. A very nice lunch is included at no cost, thanks to Glenn's generosity. Everyone is welcome to this, whether blokes or not. Again, a call to Glenn (0487 852 808) would help his catering.

Peter McKay

Left: The Blokes Helping Blokes serving staff are selected for their charm, youthful good looks, and black rubber gloves



Malcolm Henry Drechsler

7 March 1941 – 6 March 2021

Mal Drechsler was a much-loved member of St Stephen's Viewbank. His funeral took place at St John's on Monday 15th March.

After we sang the 23rd Psalm, the eulogy was given by Mal's granddaughter Chloë. Mal's wife Inez does not want the eulogy published, so it will not be reproduced here.

However I can report that we discovered that Mal was an oldest child, born in Adelaide, and he acquired later a sister and a brother. Even when young, it seems he was not backward in coming forward, and he learnt the piano, joined the Scouts and the Army Cadets, and made the decision to be a member of the Anglican Church.

He was fond of tinkering with engines, and joined the Army apprenticeship school as a motor mechanic. He met Inez in Adelaide, and later, when he was at Puckapunyal he would drive back in his VW to see her.

However he was soon to go further afield, as they sent him to Wewak in PNG. I would not have thought every army motor mechanic would have been considered for such a posting at such an early point in their career. Indeed a lot of travelling was to be a particular feature of Mal's life. Apparently while at Wewak he moonlighted on Saturday nights at the Wewak Hotel as the floor show, on the piano.

While there he also applied to officer cadet school, and while briefly in Australia for the interview, he took the opportunity to pop the question to Inez.

Officer Training School was at Portsea, but he seems to have been sent all over the country, including back to South Australia, and to Townsville. During these various peregrinations he managed to do engineering studies, and to get married.

Then there were more courses in Wiltshire in the UK, then Canberra. He took up photography and—of course—did his own developing. Then eventually back to Melbourne, ultimately buying a house in Macleod, and he was one of two families in the original plant of St Stephen's.

He was a member of the Institute of Engineers and a significant designer, using computers from as early as 1982.

In 1984 he retired from the Army (but went into the Army Reserve) and joined the Department of Defence, where he worked until 1997. After he retired he took the opportunity to visit Tasmania, as this was the only Australian state he had not worked in.

Mal was notable for being able to take two old non-going cars and make out of them one fully roadworthy vehicle. He maintained his links with the army: he was Vice President of the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Association, and went to monthly messes at Victoria Barracks.

Towards the end, as we know, his health deteriorated, and he died just one day short of his 80th birthday.

He leaves behind two children and several grandchildren.

Peter McKay



The Paschal Homily of John Chrysostom (347–407)

Version of André Lavergne

https://web.archive.org/web/20060415013027/http://www.worship.ca/docs/l_stjohn.html

Are there any who are devout lovers of God?
Let them enjoy this beautiful bright festival!

Are there any who are grateful servants?
Let them rejoice and enter into the joy of their Lord!

Are there any weary from fasting?
Let them now receive their due!

If any have toiled from the first hour,
let them receive their reward.

If any have come after the third hour,
let them with gratitude join in the feast!

Those who arrived after the sixth hour,
let them not doubt; for they shall not be short-changed.

Those who have tarried until the ninth hour,
let them not hesitate; but let them come too.

And those who arrived only at the eleventh hour,
let them not be afraid by reason of their delay.

For the Lord is gracious and receives the last even as the first.
The Lord gives rest to those who come at the eleventh hour,
even as to those who toiled from the beginning.

To one and all the Lord gives generously.
The Lord accepts the offering of every work.
The Lord honours every deed and commends their intention.

Let us all enter into the joy of the Lord!

First and last alike, receive your reward.
Rich and poor, rejoice together!

Conscientious and lazy, celebrate the day!
You who have kept the fast, and you who have not,
rejoice, this day, for the table is bountifully spread!

Feast royally, for the calf is fatted.
Let no one go away hungry.
Partake, all, of the banquet of faith.
Enjoy the bounty of the Lord's goodness!

Let no one grieve being poor,
for the universal reign has been revealed.

Let no one lament persistent failings,
for forgiveness has risen from the grave.

Let no one fear death,
for the death of our Saviour has set us free.

The Lord has destroyed death by enduring it.
The Lord vanquished hell when he descended into it.
The Lord put hell in turmoil even as it tasted of his flesh.

Isaiah foretold this when he said,
"You, O Hell, were placed in turmoil when encountering him below."

Hell was in turmoil having been eclipsed.
Hell was in turmoil having been mocked.
Hell was in turmoil having been destroyed.
Hell was in turmoil having been abolished.
Hell was in turmoil having been made captive.

Hell grasped a corpse, and met God.
Hell seized earth, and encountered heaven.
Hell took what it saw, and was overcome by what it could not see.

O death, where is your sting?
O hell, where is your victory?

Christ is risen, and you are cast down!
Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen!
Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice!
Christ is risen, and life is set free!
Christ is risen, and the tomb is emptied of its dead.

For Christ, having risen from the dead,
is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

To Christ be glory and power forever and ever. Amen!

This joyful sermon is still read out at the first service of Easter in Orthodox and Byzantine Catholic churches.

The Scott Brothers

On 23rd February 1939 the Second World War would not start for another six months, but, despite the Munich Agreement, international tensions were high. Two brothers joined the Australian Military Militia Forces, the then equivalent of the Army Reserve.

The two brothers were Russell Noel Scott, 27, and James Byerley Scott, 25. They were the youngest of a large family of four boys (of whom one died in infancy) and two girls. Both brothers were born in Highett, educated at Moorabbin State School and Mordialloc High, and in 1939 were living in Moorabbin and working for the Brighton Gas Company (Russell described himself as a labour[er], James as a 'service layer'); but their parents, Neil Charles and Elsie Emily Scott, were living at 65 Dresden St Heidelberg (now Heidelberg Heights), and associated with St John's.

The brothers were also notable sportsmen. They were both players in the Wallan East & District Football Club. James also played for Moorabbin and got the best and fairest trophy from both clubs, and was actually signed by South Melbourne (now Sydney), though he never got to play with them. Russell had the Brighton Gas Company's cricket team's best bowling average, despite being with the company only a little while, as he had been working in New Guinea for a year for a mining company. As a boy he had won the Royal Life-Saving Society's bronze medallion.

(The other surviving brother, Alex McPherson 'Mac' Scott, played football for South Melbourne in 1929 and 1931; he is on the official lists as 'Max Scott'.)



Russell Noel Scott



James Byerley Scott

west Libya, right next to the Egyptian border, on 3–5 January 1941. Russell was still a private, though also described as Driver, but James was a sergeant according to newspaper and family reports, though the official War Memorial record lists him as a corporal.

Despite being in different battalions, the two brothers were reunited in death on the first day of battle, the very first day of Australian army battle in the whole war. They were the first set of brothers to be killed in action in the AIF. They are both buried at Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery, just over the border in Egypt.

Their names are listed on the St John's Second World War memorial plaque, under the memorial Crucifixion window by Napier Waller, who created it with his left arm only, having lost his right arm at Bullecourt during the First World War.



Sources:

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=9313692>
<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=9313772>
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P10300700>
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https://oldplaces.com.au/football-at-wallan-east_trashed/
 (Information about the Scott brothers has been removed from the current version, but remains in the Google archive)
<https://oldplaces.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Scott-1940-181x300.jpg>
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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Scott

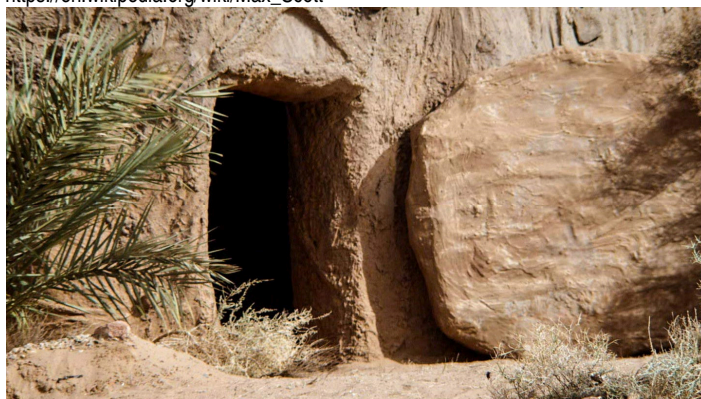


Wallan East & District Football Club 1933

Russell Scott: middle of 2nd row from back (3rd row from front)
 James Scott?: second in 3rd row from back (2nd row from front)

War was declared by Britain on 3rd September 1939, and Robert Menzies included Australia in that the same evening. Already there were fears that Australia itself would need to be defended, so the Militia and the small full-time standing army were to stay at home and a new AIF was raised to go abroad. James left the Militia on 5th November and joined the AIF; Russell did the same on 1st March 1940.

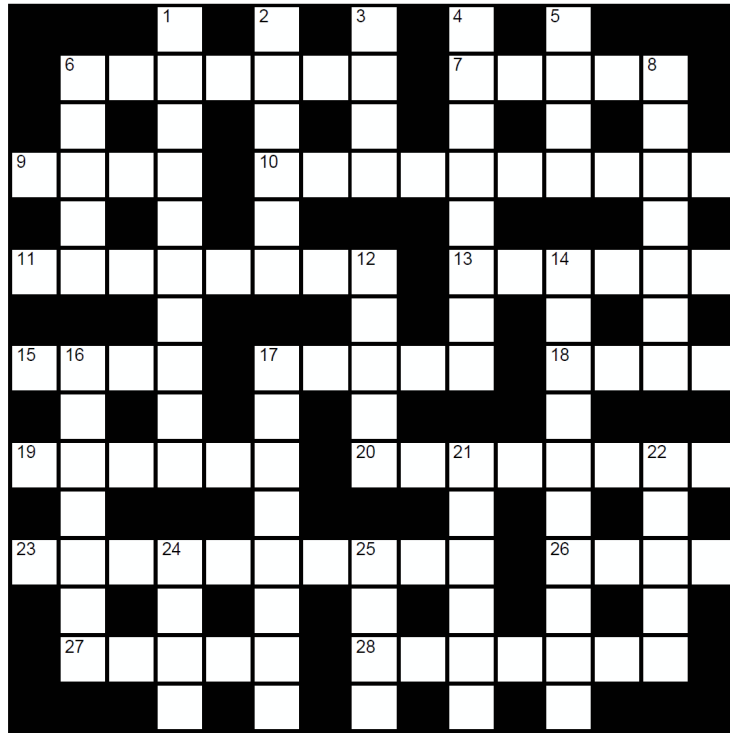
If the records are correct, the two brothers were in different battalions—Russell in the 2/5th, and James in the 2/6th Infantry Battalions. But it happened that both of these battalions fought in the AIF's very first battle, the Battle of Bardia, against a large strongly-held Italian fortress in north-



BIBLE CROSSWORD XII

Across

- 6 Of a limited distance on the Sabbath (7)
- 7 Make up for (5)
- 9 A creature to be strained? (4)
- 10 Precursor of the Exodus (3,7)
- 11 Beaten (8)
- 13 Laid aside in the tomb (6)
- 15 Babylonian deity (4)
- 17 Priestly apparel (5)
- 18 Babylonian export (4)
- 19 Source of danger (6)
- 20 Personnel of 25d (8)
- 23 Household worker (10)
- 26 Wanes (4)



by Philologus

© BiblePuzzles.com

Down

- 1 Sacrificial offering (10)
- 2 Grab harshly (6)
- 3 Anthem (4)

- 4 Young animals for sacrifice (8)
- 5 Of Solomon, for example (4)
- 6 Prophet who went to Nineveh (5)
- 8 A priestly prophet (7)
- 12 Sins (5)
- 14 Plague (10)
- 16 One of the tribes (7)
- 17 Like the Prodigal Son (8)
- 21 Not much (6)
- 22 Spiritual leader (5)
- 24 First Israelite king (4)
- 25 Military force (4)

Bible Word Search – Easter

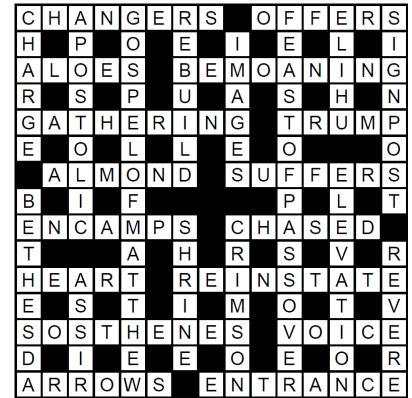
All the words listed below are in the puzzle – left, right, up, down or diagonally. Find each word and circle each letter of the words you find. After you have found all the words, the leftover letters form the **mystery answer**.

https://www.christianbiblereference.org/ws_Easter_0.htm

A I S P R I N G O H R I S E N
 L P A S S O V E R E T R I A L
 I B B C A L V A R Y M A S M J
 V M B U N P R E D E E M E D E
 E O A A H T O G L O G L A D S
 R T R G E T H S E M A N E U U
 A R A E D C W G T S P I C A S
 C R B L R A G O U L F E N C P
 H E R O I S L R R I E G A A R
 R T S E N P E E C S E S R C I
 I S T A S J M U N L H A A J E
 S O M B E T R A Y E D I E U S
 T O I R A C S I R E T E P D T
 R R E H C R U H C Y O J P A R
 G A R D E N O I T A V L A S N

- Alive, Angel, Apostles, Appearance, Arrest, Barabbas, Betrayed, Calvary, Christ, Church, Cross, Crucified, Death, Eggs, Emmaus, Garden, Gethsemane, Golgotha, Iscariot, Jerusalem, Jesus, Joy, Judas, Magdalene, Mary, Parade, Passover, Peace, Peter, Pilate, Priest, Redeemed, Risen, Romans, Rooster, Salvation, Sanhedrin, Spring, Tomb, Trial, Worship

Answers to last month's puzzles:



Bible Word Search mystery answer: **RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Last month's anagram:

- eehlmt helmet
- aabeelprrstt breastplate
- aceep peace
- hrttu truth
- dehils shield
- aeprry prayer
- dorsw sword
- bbeil Bible
- aeimnopsttt temptations
- fghit fight

Unscramble the letters to find the words in our

Daniel & the Lions Anagram

www.dltk-bible.com



- abeellmss _____
- aejlosu _____
- hmostu _____
- aberv _____
- alsw _____
- ilnos _____
- adepry _____
- cdelos _____
- aegl _____
- cdeersu _____

Galatians 1:1-10

First Sunday in Lent, 21st February

Rev Denise Nicholls

The apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians to the churches he founded on his first missionary journey. Galatia is an area in modern day Turkey.

As we begin our series on this letter, the key question that Paul writes to address, is **what do WE need to DO to be saved?**

These Christians had come to follow Jesus Christ as Lord from a pagan, non-Jewish background, and they were being told by some teachers, ('Judaisers') that they had to trust in Jesus AND follow the Old Testament laws too! that to become true Christians, they had to become Jews as well. This Letter was written by Paul to address these big and significant issues, for he reminds the Galatian Christians that it is God's Grace alone that saves; in fact **to ADD to the Gospel is to SUBTRACT from the Lord Jesus Christ's saving work of GRACE.**

From the very introduction to his letter, within the standard greeting used by most letter writers of the era, the Apostle Paul injects rich Christian doctrine about the Christian faith: that God can be called Father, that Jesus gave himself to rescue us from sin and was raised from death, meaning that Christians now have peace with God. Usually at this point in most of Paul's letters, he COMMENDS the Church for how they are going – but NOT here!

He uses two key words: **Astonished**, and **Anathema**, meaning 'under God's curse'.

When we hear shocking news, about an unexpected death or a marriage breakup we can be astonished. Sometimes we are astonished that people fall for telephone scams, or email scams where a person is asked for their bank details. And by the way, if anyone calls or emails or texts you and says 'give us your bank details' or 'click on this link' – DON'T DO IT! HANG UP!

Paul says to his friends in the churches of Galatia that he is ASTONISHED, that they are *'...so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel –⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Galatians 1:6-7*

These wrong teachers have been scamming the Galatians and confusing them with a DIFFERENT Gospel. What was this different Gospel? They were telling the Galatians:

- Yes you need Jesus...
- AND you also need follow the Mosaic Laws
- AND all males must be circumcised
- They needed to BECOME Jews to be 'REAL' Christians

Can you see that this is a Gospel of 'Jesus plus'?

Paul saw that, and his response was clear: to him, this is SERIOUS! He uses the word Anathema! Let them be under God's curse! For the Apostle, this teaching was NOT the good news of Jesus, but a **perversion of the Good news of Christ's salvation; it is the OPPOSITE of Grace.** This is why he uses the strong language he does in verse 8, and he even repeats it to hammer home his message.

Paul makes it clear that any teaching that says people need to ADD ANYTHING to the Gospel of Jesus, **ROBS JESUS' death and resurrection of its power.** After all, **WHY would Jesus die IF WE can do something to make it effective?**

I wonder, what is OUR 'Jesus plus...'? Do WE add anything to the good news message of Christ?

Perhaps we might think that serious Christians only read ONE version of the Bible; or only worship God with hymns not modern songs; or only if we use a liturgy – or don't use a liturgy. Is it that we trust in Jesus AND only baptise adults (or babies); or we are only Christian if we can speak in tongues, or we fast during Lent, or we keep the Sabbath in a particular way? Do WE have any 'Gospel Plus' ideas?

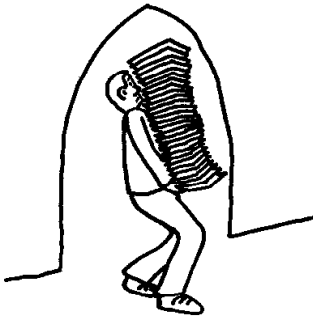
The good news of Christ's gospel is that we rely wholly on the free gift of GRACE. Years ago it was taught to me that GRACE means:

- G** God's
- R** rescue
- A** at
- C** Christ's
- E** expense

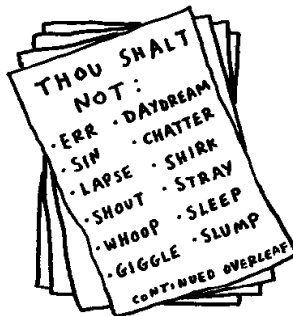
The Gospel of GRACE is precious; it is God's free gift to ALL who will receive it. Do we need to add ANYTHING to it? NO.

In conclusion, throughout this letter to the Galatians, we will see again and again the emphasis that Jesus ALONE saves us; we need only trust in His grace and rejoice in what Jesus has done.

THE WELCOME PACK



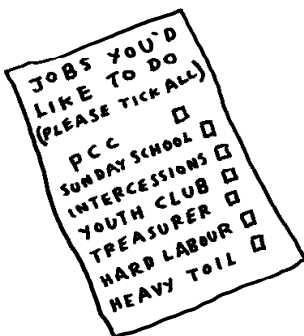
NEWCOMERS ARE GIVEN A WELCOME PACK



THIS CONTAINS THE RULES AND REGULATIONS...



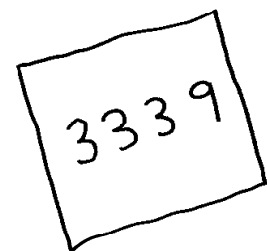
THE STANDING ORDER FORM...



THE 'VOLUNTEERING' FORM...



THE SMALL PRINT...



AND THE COMBINATION CODE FOR THE TOILETS

'From Above': Paul's Gospel

Second Sunday in Lent, 28 February 2021

Psalm 22:24–32; Galatians 1:11–24

by Patrick Senn

Introduction

It now has been almost a year since the coronavirus arrived on our shores. Thankfully, the vaccines have also started arriving and the immunisation process has begun. Although it has only been a year, we have gotten pretty used to life in a pandemic. We are all used to signing in to venues we visit, we no longer think it is strange when we see people outside of the hospital wearing masks, and we have learnt a bunch of new words and concepts, like social distancing, contact tracing, flattening the curve, and so on.

Despite all this we still do not really know much about the origins of COVID-19. A WHO team has recently completed an investigation in Wuhan, but many questions still remain. Where did it come from? How was it first formed? We know it originated in Wuhan, China. Of course, the Chinese Communist Party denies this, and instead prefers to peddle lies and conspiracy theories, like that a US soldier imported coronavirus into China. Of course, they lie to deflect from the truth and distract from the important question, "Where did it come from?"

The churches in Galatia asked the same question—"Where did it come from?"—about Paul's gospel, the message about Jesus that he preached. We heard last week that Paul travelled through Galatia preaching the message of Jesus and as a result some new churches were formed. Sometime after Paul left, some new leaders came in, claiming to have 'the real gospel', and urging the Galatians to turn away from Paul and his message, which really is man-made and therefore irrelevant. In our reading from today, Paul makes very clear that the gospel/message he preached was not his own, nor was it man-made. "Where did the gospel come from?" It came from God.

The Gospel is by Revelation

A few years ago, Beth and I went on a short holiday to Perth, WA. We booked our accommodation through Airbnb, which is a website through which people can lease out their own property for short-term stay. We had a little studio apartment in the back of a couple's home. At their gate, there was a little box with a number-combination that contained the key to the apartment. The owners messaged us the password combination before we got there. That number was something that was revealed to me. I did not have the capacity on my own to figure it out. It is not like I could do some research, or get really good at maths and eventually get the right number. No, on my own I was completely in the dark; and I depended upon someone else to make it known to me. I depended upon revelation.

And this is exactly how Paul came upon the gospel. It did not originate with himself. "*I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.*" Paul, of course, is talking about his conversion on the road to Damascus. Paul himself recounts this experience in Acts:

"About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. My companions saw

the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. 'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. 'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'"

The fundamental truths of the gospel, that Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth, were revealed to Paul by divine revelation. And as such, it bears authority, divine authority, and must be guarded from heresy, either by adding to it or taking away from it like how some of the false teachers in Galatia were doing.

Paul received the gospel from God himself, and this becomes even clearer when you consider his old life and how it got turned around by Christ. "*For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*" Paul was a Pharisee, a member of one ancient Jewish group that took God's law with utmost seriousness. Pharisees made sure that everything they did conformed to God's will, as revealed in the Law of Moses and interpreted in later Jewish tradition. And not only was Paul a member of this group, he also was a star pupil and an up and coming leader of it. This dedication to God, this zeal for God's law to be obeyed and kept by Jews, ironically, led Paul to persecute Christians and on a mission to destroy the church.

Six months ago, I read in *The Age* an interview with Bill Shorten, the previous leader of the Labor Party. He reflected on his 2019 election defeat and the valuable insights he has learnt since. He said, "*Never assume that because you think something's right and wrong, that people automatically see it from the same viewpoint. And I've learned ... in the hundreds of days since that you can be a bit arrogant even when you're fighting for what you think is fair.*"

You can be wrong, even when you think what you are doing is right. This is the problem of sin. This is the human heart. That even when we think we are doing good, we can actually be doing wrong. Paul was convinced he was righteous, that he was zealous in keeping God's will and righteousness, when in reality he was persecuting the Lord Jesus Himself, destroying his church and imprisoning the members of his body.

The Gospel is by Grace

Considering this is who Paul was, it really is a miracle, it really is proof that God revealed the gospel to him. A zealous persecutor of the church, who has a promising career and future ahead of him, does not just throw that all away. It was God who called Paul by his own initiative, by grace, and who revealed Jesus to him and chose him to be an apostle to the Gentiles (non-Jews). God chose Paul, despite him persecuting his people, despite his efforts to destroy the church, despite his blasphemy. This shows us that God is in the business of saving sinners.

God only saves wretches, God only pardons the condemned, God only makes right those who are in the wrong, and he only brings to life those who are dead. This is what Jesus meant when he said that only those who are sick need a doctor. The gospel is God's message of good news for those who are guilty, for those who are needy. This is why I believe it with my whole heart, and am dedicated to it with my whole life. Many of you know my story, that I have done some truly terrible things in my life. But, God calls sinners and extends his mercy to those who need it, he offers to fill all those who are empty, and to welcome home all those who are lost.

This is what this season of Lent is for. It is a penitential season, a time to reflect more than

we usually do on our own shortcomings, and sinfulness. We do this not just beat ourselves up, but to appreciate more what God has done for us, to allow the medicine of the gospel to heal us and lead us into repentance and holy living. We do this, fasting, mourning, and repenting from our sins, until we arrive at the festival of Easter.

The Gospel is from God

Paul was gripped by God and stopped in his tracks. On his way to imprison Christians, Jesus appeared to him from heaven, and the gospel was revealed to him. This was so certain that Paul did not need to check with anyone else. He says, "*[M]y immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.*"

When journalists work on a story that contains multiple different sources, they usually check with each of these sources to make sure the details are truthful. Did I get the timeline right? Did these events really happen in this order? Were these people really involved? But, Paul did not have to verify with anyone whether the gospel he received was accurate, because the Lord Jesus himself revealed it to Paul. Eventually, Paul did travel to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles Peter and James. But they recognised Paul's authority, they knew that Jesus had commissioned him also to be an apostle, because they saw the change that happened. In German, we have a saying when someone undergoes a complete transformation. Like in English when we say someone makes a 180 degree turn, so in German we say "*Vom Saulus zum Paulus*"—from Saul to Paul. Transforming from a persecutor to a preacher is not something that just happens. Jesus himself appeared to Paul, and commissioned him, and the apostles recognised this.

Paul's gospel really came from Jesus, it came from God. This means that the message about Jesus is not a philosophy that someone thought up; it is not a self-help technique that will dramatically improve your life. In fact, for most Christians in the Majority World when they embrace the gospel it means persecution and more hardship. But, the gospel is the message that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, in fulfilment of God's promises to Israel, and that he was raised from the dead in order to defeat death. The gospel may not make your life easier or happier, but it will unite you to God, and it will save you from your sins.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the WHO is still investigating where COVID-19 came from and how it originated. In our country, we may know where certain strains come from like from the UK or from South Africa. But we do not have a firm answer to the important question, "Where did it come from?"

The churches in Galatia were started after Paul preached the gospel to them, and they turned to Christ. But, a while after Paul left a new group of leaders arrived, claiming to be apostles, and claiming to have the 'true gospel'. They told the Galatians that the gospel Paul preached to them was wrong. It was a man-made, humanly invented gospel that bore no authority. Paul strongly counters this charge by reminding us that the message he preaches is none other than the one the Lord Jesus himself gave to him. It is the only message that saves us from our sins, that rescues us from this present evil age, that frees us from the clutches of the devil, and that secures us our citizenship in the eternal age to come. AMEN.

BY FAITH ALONE

Lent 3

Acts 9: 1–19; Galatians 2: 1–10.

by Helen McAlley

KEEPING RULES TO WIN GOD'S FAVOUR

Do you ever think that if you keep certain rules that somehow, you will win favour with God? If I could just pray for a certain time each day, or maybe give a certain amount to the church each week. Or maybe read a chapter of the Bible each day, then maybe I will win favour with God. He will then love me and accept me and want to save me from my sins.

WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH

While all these things are good things to do, they do not change God's attitude towards us. He already loves us totally. Nor can we earn our salvation with good works. We are totally dependent on Jesus for our salvation. It is a free gift which He gives us, not something we can earn. The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8,9: *'For by grace are you saved by faith, and that is not of yourself. It is the gift of God. For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.'* We see here that any good works that we do are done in gratitude to the Lord for the salvation that He freely gives us. They are good works that God has prepared for us or called us to do.

THE JUDAISERS PREACHING A GOSPEL OF WORKS

In the days of the early church, some people got this wrong. They thought that the finished work of Jesus on the cross was not sufficient to save people. They needed to also work for their salvation by observing the law of Moses. These Jewish Christians were called Judaisers. Following Paul's successful campaign in Galatia, they insisted that Gentile converts to Christianity abide by certain Old Testament rites, especially circumcision. These Judaisers argued that the apostle Paul was not an authentic apostle and that, out of a desire to make the Christian message more appealing to the Gentiles (or non-Jews), he had removed from the gospel certain legal requirements.

Paul was in a similar position to Martin Luther in the 16th century. Luther also argued that we are saved or justified by faith alone, not by the works we do or our own effort.

Paul responded to the Judaisers by clearly establishing his authority as an apostle and the correctness of the gospel that he preached.

PAUL'S STORY

In Galatians chapter 1, Paul explains how he had been a zealous Jew, persecuting Christian people, until he had had the encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road, and his whole life had been changed. The Lord had called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been called to be an apostle to the Jews. Paul had a number of years in Arabia being taught by God, then returned to Damascus, and, from there, he had gone to Jerusalem where he had spent 15 days with the apostle Peter and had seen James the brother of Jesus. Then probably 14 years after his conversion, he had gone again to Jerusalem, this time accompanied by Barnabas and Titus. Our reading today begins with this journey.

Barnabas was a Jewish Christian whose name means 'one who encourages'. Titus was a Gentile Christian.

PAUL'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM

Paul says that he went up to Jerusalem as a result of a revelation. God directed him clearly and he was obedient. It is important for us too to be obedient in whatever way the Lord directs us.

Paul privately spoke to the church leaders at Jerusalem. Previously he had been very much on his own, and it was important to be seen as being at one with those leaders, rather than a one-man band.

Paul wrote that he explained what he was teaching privately, to the church leaders, probably Peter, John and James the brother of Jesus. In doing this, Paul recognised their authority as leaders in the church. Similarly, it is important for us to recognise those in authority and not to make life difficult for them. Those who are in authority, as Paul was, must also respect the authority of others.

Paul spoke privately with the leaders, not in a big public meeting but, man to man, he, the acknowledged leader of the Gentile churches, spoke to those who were recognised as the leaders of the Jewish Christians. He explains to the Galatians, *'I set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure that I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.'* This shows humility on Paul's part. He believed firmly that the gospel message he was giving was in accord with what the rest of the church leaders were teaching, but he subjected himself to their judgment. He did not want a rift in the church. We too need to practise humility and be willing for our ideas to be checked by others, praying also for wisdom and the discernment of the Holy Spirit.

CIRCUMCISION

The Judaisers in the church at Jerusalem wanted Titus to be circumcised. It is not actually clear if Paul allowed this to happen, as he had earlier allowed Timothy to be circumcised, or if he resisted this action being taken. Paul says firmly that false believers had infiltrated that freedom that is in Christ Jesus to make the Christians slaves again to the law of Moses. Here Paul is an example to us in standing up firmly for what he knew was right. He was not a people pleaser but willing to risk being unpopular rather than giving in to false ideas.

PAUL IS ACCEPTED AS AN APOSTLE

Though he conversed with the other disciples, Paul did not receive any addition to his knowledge or authority from

them. He had learned the doctrine he taught by direct revelation from God and the Jerusalem leaders recognised that he was teaching the truth. The other apostles were fully convinced of his divine mission and authority, and accordingly acknowledged him as their fellow apostle. It was agreed that Paul and Barnabas would evangelise the Gentiles, while the Jerusalem Christians would continue to preach to the Jews. The meeting ended harmoniously. The Judaisers had claimed that Paul was not an authentic apostle, but his recognition by the leaders in Jerusalem should now have been sufficient to silence those who opposed him and the gospel he was preaching.

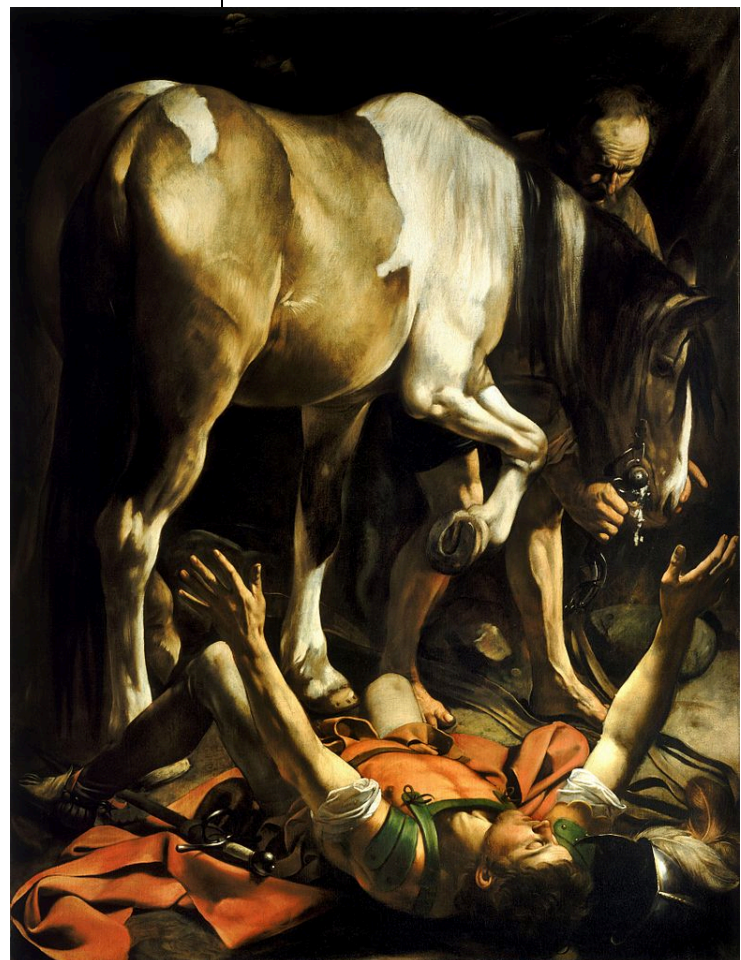
WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

Do we, like those Judaisers, add to the message of the gospel or do we teach, like Paul, that we come to Jesus with nothing in our hands? As the old hymn says, *'Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling.'* Then, just as we have received Jesus as an act of faith, do we remember that we also live the Christian life by faith too, by faith in our wonderful God who constantly upholds and strengthens us through the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER

Shall we pray? Lord, we thank you for the all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus. We can do nothing to earn our salvation. It is the gift of God. Help us to remember that you love us totally. Nothing that we do can make you love us more. We are your beloved children. Just as we have been saved by faith, may we also live by faith in Jesus, trusting that, by the Holy Spirit, you are everything to us. We pray in the all powerful name of Jesus. Amen.

Helen McAlley



Caravaggio, *Conversion on the Way to Damascus* (ca. 1600–1)

'Don't Fake it Until you Make it'

The Fourth Sunday in Lent, 14 March 2021

Ps 74; Leviticus 18:1-5; Galatians 2:11-21

by Patrick Senn

Introduction

No one likes a hypocrite, especially not when it is someone in a public leadership position. Last year, when New Zealand was still in the early stages of the pandemic, the health minister announced that a lockdown was happening, and he and his government asked everyone to make historic sacrifices by staying at home. And then, twice he was caught defying his own restrictions. First, he drove with his family to the beach to go for a stroll, and a later time he drove to a park near his home to go mountain biking. He described himself as an 'idiot' for this, and resigned from his position.

In our own country when we went through the national plebiscite on re-defining marriage, the Nationals MP Barnaby Joyce was very public and vocal about his opposition to the change. He said that we must protect the sacred institution of marriage. Not long after, he cheated on his wife with his former and much younger staffer, and is now raising a baby with her.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse unveiled the hypocrisy of so many clergy and the church, who were preaching holiness and love of God and neighbour, all the while engaging in abuse, in cover-ups, in everything they seemingly taught against by their words.

In our reading from Galatians today, St Paul rebukes and denounces hypocrisy. Not because he is the morality police, but because the particular hypocrisy that he witnessed threatened the message of Jesus, the message that has the power of eternal life. No one likes a hypocrite, but hypocrisy in the name of God is about as evil as you can get, as the Royal Commission has shown.

'In your Face': Hypocrisy not tolerated (Gal 2:11-14)

The last few weeks we have heard that the resurrected Jesus himself, from heaven, revealed the gospel to Paul and chose him to be an apostle to the non-Jews Gentiles. The other apostles were chosen by Jesus while he was still on earth. But they also acknowledged Paul's calling, saw the grace of God in his life, and sent him out to the Gentiles. Paul tells us that he was in Antioch in Syria, and Peter/Cephas eventually joined him there.

Now, before we get into the hypocrisy we have to remember that the ancient world was a highly stratified society. We think in Australia we are a very egalitarian society. Our national anthem says "We are one and free", and as long as you work hard and obey the laws of this country anyone is welcome. But, it was only 100 years ago when only white people were allowed into Australia, and women could vote for the first time. And still today, celebrities can come to Australia and film their movies, while ordinary citizens are still stranded abroad. Tennis players can flock by the hundreds into Melbourne, while Victorians are trapped interstate and are not allowed to return. Regular plebs must quarantine in a small hotel room with no fresh air, while Danii Minogue can quarantine in her own mansion. The ancient world was marked by difference—slave and free, wealthy and poor, Jews and Gentiles. While in our world you can work your way to the top, or someone poor can marry into a rich family, in Paul's time the boundaries were permanent. And for Jews in

particular, they marked their difference by their diet. Many Jews did not even eat in the same room as Gentiles, much less eat certain foods. This is why Jesus was so radical; in his life he fulfilled all of the food laws and thus made them redundant. Identity no longer is based on ethnicity but on faith in him. This is precisely the message that he preached, and entrusted to Peter and to Paul to preach.

Peter really did believe this. When he visited Paul in Antioch he ate at the same table as the Gentile followers of Jesus, as well as their non-kosher foods. But Paul says this changed when "certain men came from James", and "when they arrived he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group." Even worse, other Jews were influenced by this and copied him, even Barnabas who alongside Paul was sent to preach to the Gentiles! In Paul's eyes, this was hypocrisy; acting not on principles believed to be true but simply out of fear. As he says, Cephas was "condemned" because he was not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, communicating with his actions that the Gentiles do not belong to God because of the way that they eat. Paul rebuked Peter publicly to his face: "*When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"* If Peter can disregard the kosher laws for a while and live like a Gentile, why suddenly force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

Everyone despises hypocrites, but it is actually quite easy to be one. If St Peter, the first apostle can easily become one, how much more anyone else? A hypocrite is someone who fails to practice what he or she preaches; but, how many of us fail to live up to our own ideals? Just last year, when we came out of the first lockdown I met with an elderly woman and her daughter about conducting a funeral for their husband and father. Then, the next day I developed symptoms: shortness of breath, cough, a temperature. I called Denise and asked her to do the funeral, and to let the family know. Later, Denise told me that when she spoke with the daughter, she got really worried about her mum, and whether I had infected her with the virus. And I remember when Denise told me this, in my heart I was judging that woman. "Why doesn't she care at all about how I am? Why just care for her own family?" And then, not a very long time later, I spoke on the phone with my mum who told me she had been in contact with someone who tested positive. My immediate reaction was to ask: "Are you ok?" "Were you close to him? Are you feeling sick?" I did not even think about the other person, I only cared for my mum. What a hypocrite I am, who believes one thing and judges others for it, and then I don't even live by it myself.

The Law is Futile (Gal 2:15-18)

Paul opposed Peter to his face for his hypocrisy, and in verses 15-21 we have his words to Peter. In these verses, we can listen in on their conversation, and hear why Peter's actions are so wrong. Both Peter and Paul were born Jews, not sinful Gentiles. They were born into a relationship with God, and part of the blessings God promised to Israel. In our first reading, we heard God's expectations of the Jews: They are to uphold his law, and in so doing live. And yet, the history of Israel and human experience shows that no one can actually keep God's law perfectly.

The Attorney-General has been in the news the past few weeks due to an allegation that he raped a woman many years ago. The big question everyone wonders about is, "Did he do it or not?" "Is he guilty or innocent?" Last year, we asked the same questions of Cardinal Pell, and 30 years ago of Lindy Chamberlain. But before God, no one is innocent. No one can claim to be perfectly just. And so, Paul says to Peter in verse 16, "*a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.*" Because we are sinners, because our hearts are infected with sin, we cannot keep God's law, and we cannot be made right by it. Only Jesus is perfect, only Jesus is innocent, only Jesus perfectly kept all of God's commandments until his death. And so, only trust in Jesus justifies or makes right, and this is true for everyone, Jews and Gentiles. The law does not fix sin, only Jesus does, and yet Peter was abandoning Jesus and returning to the law once more.

Law kills, Christ makes alive (Gal 2:19-21)

Under the law, we are condemned. We fail to live up to our own ideals, how much more to the just and perfect demands of a holy and perfect God? So, what do we do when we grievously fail? What do we do when we sin? We flee to Christ. In verse 20 are the most beautiful words a sinner can hear, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*" Although he was innocent and perfect, Jesus died in our place under the condemnation of the law. All our ugliness, all our hypocrisy, all our shortcomings have been crucified with Christ. All these things along with sin have died, and it is no longer us who live but Christ who lives in us. And so we live before God not by being perfect, not being performing well and ticking all his boxes, but simply by trust/faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself up for us.

Conclusion

In conclusion, no one likes a hypocrite. Whether it is a government health official telling others to follow public health orders, who then himself does not follow them; or whether it is a conservative politician telling others to keep marriage sacred and who then cheats on his wife with his staffer. Or, whether it is corrupt clergy who just pretend to be holy while on the inside being rotten to the core. No one likes hypocrites. The hypocrisy is bad enough in itself, but so very often it inflicts tremendous pain and damage. Just think of all the people who were betrayed by the church. In our reading, St Paul rebuked Peter publicly to his face for his hypocrisy, and for the tremendous damage and shame it was bringing upon Jesus. Peter knew that God's law cannot make us holy. You just look at the history of Israel as well as human experience, and you see that no one is innocent or perfectly kept God's law. Only Jesus is perfect, and innocent, and all together righteous, and it is only by his faithfulness that we can be saved. And although Peter knew this, he acted hypocritically by relying once again upon the law, by refusing to eat with the Gentiles and refusing to eat non-kosher foods.

And really, we all are Peter. We all tend to rely on ourselves, we all quickly act contrary to our own standards, as we confess, we all like sheep go astray. And yet, Jesus died exactly for people like us.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." AMEN.

Don't jump!

Fifth Sunday in Lent, 21st March

Genesis 15:1–6; Galatians 3:1–14

by *Catriona Johnson*

Antarctica is an astonishingly beautiful place, but it is also a dangerous and risky place where very few things go to plan.

About 6 years ago, I travelled to the French Antarctic station, Dumont d'Urville, on board the ice-breaker *l'Astrolabe*. As always, the voyage down was spectacular. Sometimes smooth and comfortably roly, sometimes very, very rough, but always breathtakingly beautiful. And this was due in part to the fact that there was a lot of sea ice that year. Breaking through the ice to the station was slow going and we were not able to get right to the dock.

So we tied up to the fast ice, and flew to the station by helicopter.

Some weeks later, our work done, we flew back to the ship, and started the long voyage back home. But after only a few hours, the ice closed around us, and locked us in tight.

We were stuck, fast.

We were just drifting with the ice and there was nothing that we could do to free ourselves.

Some expeditioners coped better than others. Some trusted that the captain and his crew knew what they were doing.

Others got quite anxious, and started to question what was happening, if enough was being done to save us, and did all the right people know we were stuck. They wanted to contact nearby vessels, organise for the US navy to come and get us, some even talked about skiing back to the station.

And as they voiced their opinion louder and louder, others started to listen to them and to question the competency of the captain and crew to get us into hotter water as it were.

They wanted to try and rescue themselves, or at least push things along, even when it made no sense.

It was foolishness.

Paul was addressing a similar situation in our passage this morning, in his letter to Galatians.

If you'd like, it would be helpful to have it open in front of you.

The Galatians had made the decision to get on the boat, but they had been led astray or bewitched by those who thought that more needed to be done to save themselves, and they wanted to get off the boat and join others in their own rescue attempt.

Paul writes this letter because he is concerned about who the Galatians think they are.

Do they see themselves as part of the Messiah-family, those who believe that Jesus is their saviour and that through his death and resurrection, they are now part of the kingdom of God?

Or, do they see themselves as part of the physical family of Jews, the people of God defined by ethnic origin? That if they want to be Christians, they have to take part in all the Jewish rituals such as the food laws, observing the Sabbath and be circumcised.

It is hard not to feel Paul's frustration. His direct language speaks volumes.

He knows that they know better. After all, he is the one who has been preaching the good news about Jesus' life, death and resurrection to them. The message that saves all who believe.

He has been preaching Christ crucified all along. As Paul says in v 1, they have no reason to be confused and to be lead astray.

In his bewilderment, Paul encourages the Galatians to think through what they are doing by focusing on two points:

How did they become Christians? and How are they living as Christians right now?

So firstly, let's look at point 1: *How did they become Christians?*

It is important to note here that there is no doubt in Paul's mind that the Galatians are Christians.

After all, in v 2, he uses the phrase "Did you receive the Spirit by....".

They know the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who Jesus promised would be sent by the Father to be with believers forever, is already in them (John 14:16).

Their knowledge of the Spirit is not academic, it is personal, it is a sign that they have accepted Christ.

Paul needs them to think more deeply about how this came about:

Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? (continuing on with v 2)

We don't know what the response of the Galatians was, but if we were there, we can imagine a bit of foot shuffling, looking down at the ground. Silence perhaps.

And particularly because Paul brings out his checkmate move: the father of God's chosen people, the patriarch, the man who they had been taught about, Abraham, the great man of faith.

This is really the crux of Paul's argument against what the Galatians are doing.



In v 6, Paul quotes Genesis 15:6, and that is our Old Testament reading this morning: *Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

The critical thing about this is that God made his promise to Abraham despite Abraham's response. God extended his grace to Abraham first.

And Abraham does respond with faith in God's promise, even though its fulfilment is a long way off, and at that time, his wife Sarah, is barren.

He is trusting and his faith is extraordinary.

And so, through his faith, God declares that Abraham is right with Him. He is righteous, he has been justified. He is in right relationship with God.

So *what?* The Galatians are asking

You are like Abraham! Don't you understand!

Through your own faith, you are **already** part of God's chosen people!

those who have faith are children of Abraham (v7)

The Galatians are already on the boat.

This is where Paul's argument is heading.

God would justify the Gentiles by faith, . . . so those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (vv 8-9).

The Galatians don't have to do all those extra things that the Judaisers are telling them to do, because they have already been justified through their faith in Jesus, and that includes Gentiles.

This is God's promise to Abraham. That his spiritual children would include everybody, not just the Jews, the ethnic descendants of Abraham, but everyone who believes.

And now, Paul moves onto his second point: *How are they living right now?*

Paul's argument swirls around a bit, we get the impression that he is on a bit of a roll, and he has already briefly mentioned his second point in v3:

After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? (v3)

Or, essentially, what on earth are you doing now?

You started off the right way, you were on the boat, but now you want to get off!

You want to put your confidence in things of the flesh, in human works, not the work of Christ!

Paul knows that the Galatians have seen God working miracles in those around them and they have felt their transformation through His Spirit.

But others, such as the Judaisers, have convinced them that this is not enough to be true members of God's family.

So Paul continues on with a thinly veiled dig at the Judaisers who have been leading the Galatians astray. He tells them that in fact, if they continue down the road they are on, that is, the road of the law, they are **cursed, not saved.**

Because Paul knows that he will get objections from those who know the Scriptures well, he backs up his argument with quotes from the Old Testament.

The first quote that he uses in v 10, is a verse from Deuteronomy 27:26:

Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.

The law is an expression of God's character and will, designed to show humans how to live in a way that is righteous, or right with God. But as sinful humans, we will **never** be able to keep it. We can never avoid the curse of the law on our own.

So, pure and simple, we are cursed.

The second quote that Paul uses, in v 11, is from Habakkuk 2.4:

the righteous will live by faith.

A quote that cements his position that God **never** intended us to be saved by the law.

Paul is showing the Galatians that there are two paths they can take, two ways of living.

The first makes faith the way of salvation, the second works in obedience to the law.

The first promises life to the believer and the second, to the doer.

The first trusts that God has done the work through Jesus to make us righteous, the second trusts themselves and their own works.

So what Paul is really asking the Galatians is: *Whose family do you belong to?*

Do the Galatians believe that Jesus alone is their Lord and Saviour and that he is sufficient for their salvation? Do they believe the gospel? If so, they are already a spiritual child of Abraham, God's chosen people.

Or, have they yielded to the Judaisers by trying to keep the law, in contradiction to the gospel.

Paul is calling them back off the ice and into the boat, hoping that they will see sense and listen to him.

He is trying to convince them that they did not become Christians through keeping the Jewish law, and they don't continue as Christians by observing the law.

Being a Christian starts and continues as a matter of faith. The Jewish law has nothing to add to it.

At this point we could shake our heads and agree with Paul and say, 'Yes, they were foolish Galatians.'

But let me reread part of the passage to you:

You foolish Victorians and Tasmanian! Who has bewitched you? You have heard time and time again in all the church services that you go to, that Jesus died on the cross so that you might live. Are you still focused on Jesus?

Do you fully trust the promises that God has made to us, that through his Son, we would become part of His own people?

*Or do you think that that is too simple, that that is too easy, too good to be true and that **you** have to do something as well to earn your salvation?*

Do you really trust God? Or do you really only trust yourself and what you can do?

Is Jesus really your Lord and Saviour, or, are you?

It's a bit sobering to realise that Paul's letter to the Galatians could so easily have been written to us, here and now.

The question now for us is: How do we avoid becoming like the Galatians?

The answer is really quite simple. We do nothing.

We stay on the boat. We don't try to get off onto the ice. We just stay put and keep having faith in God's promise of salvation in Jesus.

And this is what Paul tells the Galatians. In v 14 he writes:

[Christ] redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

It is through faith alone that we receive the promise of God's Spirit to live within us always, and to live with him for eternity.

That is it.

We just have to stay on the boat and trust our captain that he will bring us home safe and sound. Anything else is not an option.

That he will bring us home as on that January morning, when there was the slightest breath of wind, from just the right direction. And we were free of the ice. We had been saved.

Lent is a wonderful time for us to reflect on this and to refocus on Jesus

It is a time where, through prayer and spiritual renewal, we dwell on the cross, on the reality of Jesus' death, resurrection and the rebirth that it gives us.

Where we can come before God's throne of grace, and in humility rest in His mercy, grateful that He is faithful.

Antarctica is incredibly beautiful. It is a place to experience in awe and wonder. While we waited, we rested in its beauty, in our safety, in our thankfulness. So, we can do likewise, as we wait for Jesus to return.

This service is rich in so many ways to help us focus on Jesus

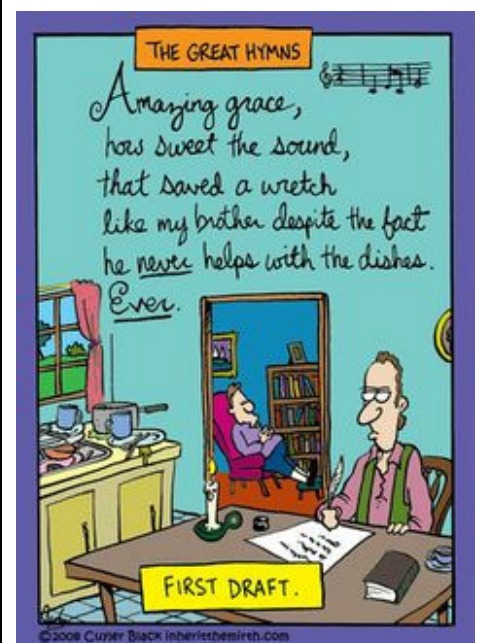
In a moment, in the rich tradition of Anglican worship, we are going to say the Nicene creed, the confession, the prayer of humble access, and share the Lord's supper together.

These are all profound affirmations of being declared right with God, that, even in our sinfulness and weakness, we can come before Him as his children, united together by his grace, not

trusting in our own righteousness, but in his manifold and great mercies.

So, let us join together, not as those who are foolish and bewitched. But as children of Abraham, made right with God, through Christ by faith.

Amen.



Parish Council Notes

Zoom meeting of Monday 15th March

- **Correction:** No diagrams of community garden stairs yet sent to council. When sent, Parish Council to also get.

Correspondence

- Sent, approving stairs behind church to community garden.

Diocesan professional standards

- Progress report (thanks Andrew Fegan). All on PC will need a police check and a Working With Children Check.

OH&S

- Latest Diocesan COVID-19 advice tabled.

Finance report tabled.

St John's building repairs

- Part 1 General roof and windows; Part 2 Bell tower. Peter Harper's proposal presented for repairs at St John's, amounting to ca \$250,000. The repairs are needed to avoid a financial disaster later. Agreed we need a second estimate/quote. In principle, agreed to part 1 works being undertaken in 2021, part 2 in 2022. Grants should be sought and applied for, as well as asking church members for contributions to specific projects.

Op shop proposal from BSL

- Four options:
 - A: BSL and church remain in share agreement on BSL's terms;
 - B: BSL operate store independently, church invoices BSL for rent as a landlord agreement;
 - C: BSL and church enter into an agreement at a different property nearby;
 - D: Agreement ends between BSL and church.
- Option A is the only one BSL and PC can both agree to, so accepted. Terms similar to those BSL proposed before; BSL will run the store. Details and dates TBC.

Vicar's report (oral).

Curate's report

- Fully recovered from nasty cold caught from Phoebe. Grateful to Denise, warden, Catriona for stepping in. No longer can 'soldier on'.
- Attended Merri Creek for first time since partnership started, introduced as member of staff. I gave a short version of my testimony: warm welcome. Meeting Pete Carolane on Tuesday mornings. Rest of time at Merri Creek getting to know people interested in the church plant. Enrolled with Merri Creek team in 'The Incubator', church planting course at All Saints.
- Sixth inquiry for baptisms, and only March! Taken one baptism so far, two scheduled for Palm Sunday. Due to restrictions on numbers, separate from main Sunday service.
- Interred ashes of a woman who had funeral at St John's last year, at Yan Yean Reservoir. Took a funeral during snap five-day lockdown.
- Two weddings later this year.
- Interesting start to Lent as we quickly had to move back into lockdown. Disappointing Ash Wednesday had to move online, but everyone used to the new circumstances we are in.
- Bible study on the Lenten collects from BCP.
- Archbishop's Conversation's will resume at Federation Square; I am still MC. Three conversations scheduled for 2021, first next week.
- Back, first time for a year, to bringing Communion to the nursing homes in our parish.
- Day introduced Merri Creek, invited to preach Evensong All Saints, East St Kilda. Contrast!

Warden's report

- 18/12-16 Jika St
 - Denise handling dog-created damage herself.
- 57 Gloucester Drive
 - Bathroom basins done.
 - A/C unit gives error message: seeking expert.
 - Side gate: In progress.
 - Upstairs shower seems OK now.
 - Still no word on termites.

St John's

- Church building: see above.
- Vegetation around tennis courts in progress.
- Spoken to Clancy Foley-Baker about casual tennis arrangements. Bigger project in mind?
- No communication from 1A on Desert Ash. Look for a replacement tree in the winter.

St Andrew's

- Hand-basin tap washer replaced in men's toilets.
- Narthex carpet has been steam-cleaned: no difference.
- Fellowship Hall rightmost door sticks: framing is rotten. Seek a quote.
- Unauthorised entries to Parish Hall. Toilet key stolen but nothing else known to be missing. Footscape given replacement toilet key, have re-keyed exterior locks. Evidence of jemmying the front door: may have to cut down small tree in front to improve visibility.
- Small working bee group 10.30 am – 1.30 pm Saturday 1st May to remove some dead trees and other work.

80 Watsonia Rd

- John Ryan having difficulty contacting tenant re shed roof.

Holy Spirit

- Cupboard has been taken. Chair trolley has been put on top of the vestry metal cupboard.
- Gum tree previously damaged all came down. Re-enabled access to the op shop keybox, will clear rest when able.
- Op shop: see above.

Op shop report tabled.

Diocese Business Services Bulletin tabled.

Banyule-Merri Creek partnership

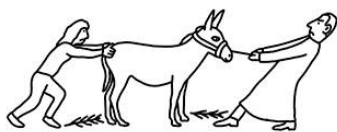
- MOUs to be worked on next Warden's meeting.

General business

- Request from Heidelberg Dermatology to rent 3 parking spaces. \$20 per parking space per day. Awaiting their answer. PC in favour.

Minutes by Patrick, précis by Editor

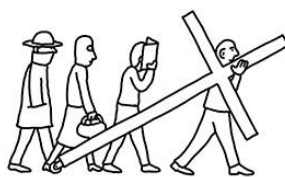
HOLY WEEK AND EASTER



PROCESSING WITH A DONKEY



FOOT WASHING



WALK OF WITNESS



THREE HOUR GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE



HOT CROSS BUNS



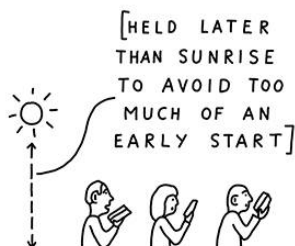
EASTER GARDENS



EASTER BONNETS



DECORATING THE CHURCH



SUNRISE SERVICE

[HELD LATER THAN SUNRISE TO AVOID TOO MUCH OF AN EARLY START]



EASTER EGG HUNT



CLERGY HAVING TO DRESS UP AS SOME KIND OF RABBIT

WHAT WAS THE VICAR WEARING THIS MORNING?



EASTER SUNDAY LUNCH

As soon as she had finished at St Mary's convent school in Mullingar, a bright young girl named Aileen shook the dust of Ireland off her shoes and made her way to New York where before long, she became a successful performer in show business.

Eventually she returned to her home town for a visit and on a Saturday night went to confession in the church, which she had always attended as a child.

In the confessional Father O'Malley recognised her and began asking her about her work. She explained that she was an acrobatic dancer, and he wanted to know what that meant. She said she would be happy to show him the kind of thing she did on stage. She stepped out of the confessional and within sight of Father O'Malley, she went into a series of cartwheels, leaping splits, handsprings and back flips.

Kneeling near the confessional, waiting their turn, were two elderly ladies. They witnessed Aileen's acrobatics with wide eyes, and one said to the other, 'Will you just look at the penance Father O'Malley is giving out this night, and me without me bloomers on.'

https://www.funny-jokes.com/jokes/clean_christian_jokes.htm