

BANYULE BABBLE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGLICAN PARISH OF BANYULE
ST JOHN'S HEIDELBERG ✱ HOLY SPIRIT WATSONIA

MARCH
2024

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DENISE'S DATELINE

ASH WEDNESDAY – THE BEGINNING OF LENT

From 1 Timothy 6: ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain...
¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

It may seem strange to speak about **contentment** and **enjoyment** during Lent! After all, isn't this traditionally the season when we speak about giving things up, denying ourselves things that are special to us, so that we can devote ourselves to prayer and reflecting on God's goodness?

Well, yes that is how some, though not all Christians celebrate this season of Lent. It is a reason of remembering, reflecting and reminding ourselves of Jesus' time in the wilderness as he prepared for his ministry.

Our Ash Wednesday service includes the ancient rite of the 'imposition of ashes' where we are signed with the sign of cross, not with oil, but with ashes. In doing so we are reminded of our mortality, that we 'come from dust and will return to dust'. As this year's Ash Wednesday occurred on 14 February, Valentine's Day, it was a sharp contrast to the culture of romantic love that surrounds us.

Contentment is the idea of being satisfied with our lives, with what we have; the scripture above tells us that when paired with godliness, it is of great gain: for it means that we are trusting in God for our lives. The contrast for us today is to be tempted into the consumerist view of life that has been coined 'affluenza' – wanting more all the time. When we know *whose* we are, that we belong to God, we can be content in being known and loved by our creator. Which is how Paul continues, with encouraging those who are rich now – that's us compared with most of the world – to put our hope NOT in any earthly riches, but in God, the giver of all good things.

I love how the Apostle Paul speaks of the good things that God gives us **for our enjoyment**. What are some of the things to YOU enjoy? We can give thanks to God for those things AND enjoy them, even in Lent! Yet we keep in mind that these things are perishable, they will not last. Like us, they too will turn to dust.

The only sure thing, says our Lord, is to put our hope in God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Denise



Apology

In last month's *Babble* we said that Bill Woolnough made the Pascal candlestick at Holy Spirit (*right*). The Editor has now been informed that in fact Bill sourced the wood (from the Tramway Workshops, where it was presumably meant to become a tram), but Allan Way turned it into the Pascal candlestick by turning it. (Readers will be aware that Allan has quite a turn for turning.) The Editor sincerely apologises to Allan for his error.

Lent, Holy Week, Easter



Wednesday February 14	7.30 pm Holy Spirit: Imposition of Ashes
Sunday February 18	9.30 am Holy Spirit: Lent 1
Sunday February 25	9.30 am St John's: Lent 2
Sunday March 3	9.30 am St John's: Lent 3 (All-age) 5 pm Holy Spirit: Lent 3
Sunday March 10	9.30 am St John's: Lent 4 5 pm Holy Spirit: Lent 4
Sunday March 17	9.30 am St John's: Lent 5
Sunday March 24	9.30 am Holy Spirit: Palm Sunday
Thursday March 28	9.30 am St John's: Service of Shadows
Friday March 29	9.30 am Holy Spirit: Good Friday
Sunday March 31	9.30 am St John's: Easter Day



LENT and Letting Go

-  Let go of bitterness. Embrace forgiveness.
-  Let go of jealousy. Embrace gratitude.
-  Let go of anger & hate. Embrace charity.
-  Let go of pride. Embrace humility.
-  Let go of lust. Embrace purity.
-  Let go of sins. Embrace GOD.



Submitted by Olive Clements (colours altered)

This Month – March

Sunday 3rd Lent 3: 9.30 am St John's (all-age), 5 pm Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 1:18–25; John 2:13–22

Wednesday 6th: 11 am Iris Grange; 3.30 pm Strathalan

Sunday 10th Lent 4, Mothering Sunday: 9.30 am St John's, 5 pm Holy Spirit

Ephesians 2:1–10; John 3:14–21

Sunday 17th Lent 5: 9.30 am Combined at **St John's**

Hebrews 5:5–14; John 12:20–33

Sunday 24th Palm Sunday: 9.30 am Combined at **Holy Spirit**

TBC

Wednesday 27th: 10 am Holy Spirit Mothers' Union; 11 am Streeton Park & general mid-week service at St John's; 3.30 pm Regis Macleod

Thursday 28th Maundy Thursday: 7.30 pm St John's Service of Shadows

1 Corinthians 11:23–36; John 13:1–17, 31b–35

Friday 29th Good Friday: 9.30 am Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 1:18–31; John 18:1–19:42

Sunday 31st Easter Day: 9.30 am Combined at St John's

John 20:1–18; Acts 10:34–43

Wanted

- Another churchwarden
- More *mainly music* volunteers
- Musicians

The Watsonia Altarcloth

by Elsie Storr

Joyce Quinn made this cloth (picture below). Joyce belonged to St Andrew's Rosanna Ladies Guild and Mothers' Union. (Joyce is 100 and is still living in her home.)

Holy Spirit has four Communion Cloths: three hand-worked cotton ones, and the machine polyester one that is on the Communion Table now—this shows off the timber top edge (being a timberman's daughter, I admire that also). The hand-worked cloths will be on for special times. The other two cloths are from St Phillip's West Heidelberg; one has butterflies on, a symbol of new life.

Here's a puzzle for you, why do I need to buy a Red Rooster chicken dinner when I launder a Communion Cloth?

Answer: Before I wash the Communion Cloth, I need to get the candle wax off the cloth. You place a piece of brown paper on either side and with a warm iron, you iron the brown paper and the wax comes off on the brown paper. I have found Red Rooster brown paper bags are the best. Of course you need to dodge the Red Rooster.

Holy Spirit Mothers' Union

At our meeting on Wednesday 24th January 2024 at 10 am, Val welcomed a visitor Anne, then led us in our MU Service, with two songs from *Covenant Songs*.

There was no speaker today as we have our funding to arrange: Our subscriptions of \$45 each to MU: this includes *Mia Mia Mag*. A donation of \$50 to IPC (Intercessory Prayer Chain) for the house-bound.

Our \$2 each for morning tea goes to funding to the Karen Nursery School and cattle feed.

Thank you, Coral, for sending Christmas card greetings to our link branch, St Mary's Broughty Ferry, Scotland.

A thank you email from Rev June (Women's Prison Chaplain), for our Christmas cards we posted to Altona MU.

Our Meeting ended with Midday Prayers: for Diocesan members (meeting at St Paul's Cathedral), seafarers, and the Defence Anglican Chaplaincy. Our next meeting is on Wednesday 28th February 2024.

Elsie Storr

Email from the Melbourne Diocesan Mothers' Union President:

Dear MU Members,

A message from Rev June that reinforces the importance and value of what we are able to do:

I have attached a copy of a card sent as a thank you from one of the women who is in a 'confinement' section of the prison, hence unable to buy Christmas cards for family.

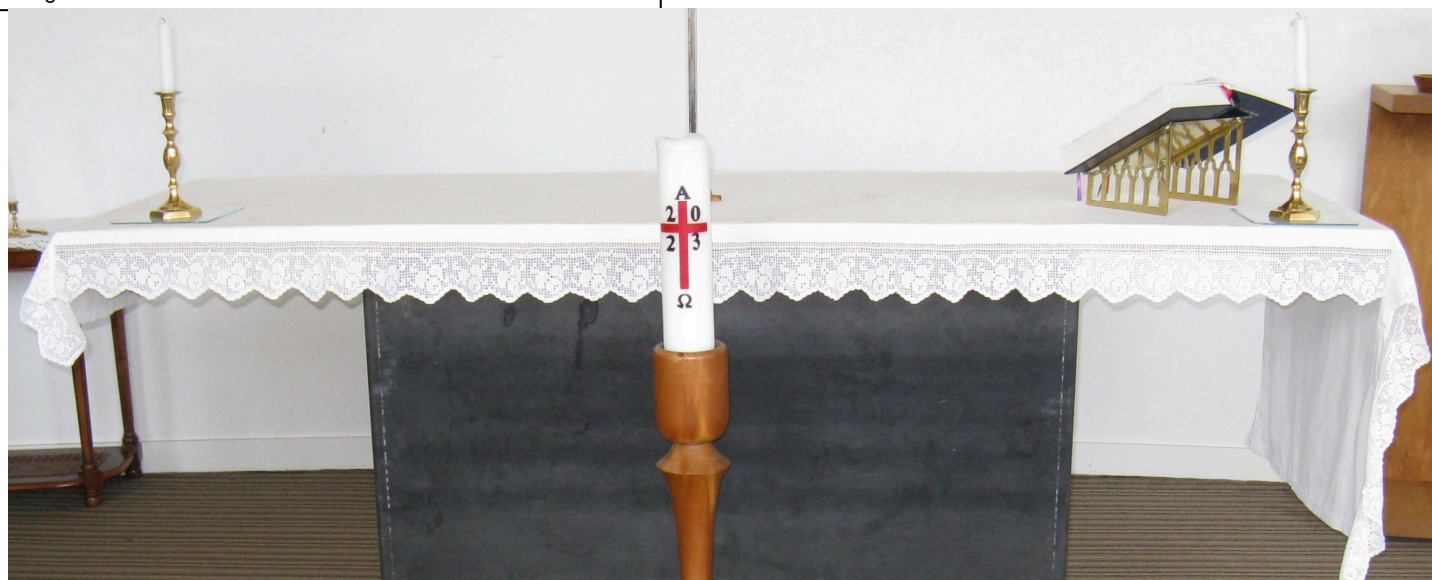
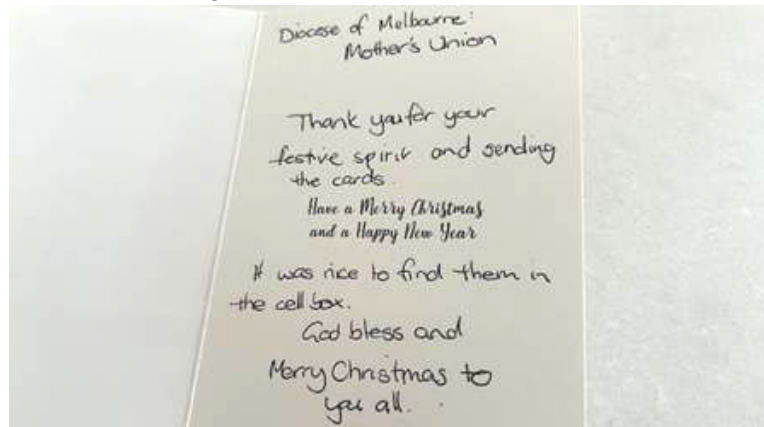
This is what she wrote when receiving her 5 cards from MU – which I know she valued enabling her to send a card to her loved ones.

Thank you so much for the joy from the women who received cards. I have heard many say how much they appreciate MU taking the time to actually think about them each year, & how much it means especially to the long termers.

May you be blessed as you have blessed many others. I remain grateful.

Take care & God bless. June (Rev.)

Peace and Blessings, *Kären Hayden*



mainly music: March 2024

In February another milestone was acknowledged by the *mainly music* organisation, i.e. Watsonia's completion of 15 years of dedicated team members' time and energy serving the local community in this great outreach program.

Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic had disastrous effects on the program in the Parish of Banyule. In the interim it was delivered on-line.

Following this, many of the 'senior' personnel decided not to risk their future health and withdrew from the teams. As a result, the Heidelberg and Rosanna programs had to be placed on hold and eventually closed, leaving only Watsonia standing tall.

Watsonia team members were presented with their official celebration certificates at our Commissioning service on 5 February.

Our special occasion celebration will be held on 13 March, with a visit to the beautiful Royal Botanic Gardens, enjoying commentary in an open-air minibus, followed by lunch at *The Terrace* restaurant on-site.

For the monthly March report, 9 families from last year have returned, including one with a new baby. So far 4 new families have been registered to attend. We continue to have an extensive waiting list, although it's gradually being reduced. Some families have been invited to attend, but have not responded, thus being removed. This is a tedious process!

We commenced the program on 8 February with Registration/information Day, and music sessions began the next week. There have been some new songs and instruments introduced this year, the theme of Term 1 is 'Love'. As Easter is early this year, the term is short, ending on 28 March when we have our Easter celebration.

Rhonda Taylor



Submitted by Denise Nicholls



You are invited to our 2024

Annual Lenten

McKinney Lecture

What is happening to asylum seekers in Australia these days?

Guest Lecturer

Sr. Brigid Arthur



A public lecture sponsored by Banyule Churches Together

Tuesday 27 February at 7.30pm

St. George's Anglican Church
46 Warncliffe Rd
Ivanhoe East 3079

Sister Brigid Arthur CSB, AO, is an Australian Brigidine sister, educator, refugee advocate and activist on social issues. She was co-founder of the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project, has acted as litigation guardian for children, and has been a teacher and principal of several Catholic secondary colleges. She is also an author, trustee of Kildare Ministries, Life Member of Catholic Social Services Victoria and a winner of the 2021 Pro Bono Public Impact Award.

All Welcome
Further information
ivanhoe@cam.org.au



World Day of Prayer 2024 Palestine



Friday 1 March at 11.00am
Mary Immaculate Catholic Church
4 Waverley Ave Ivanhoe

Mission News

New Archbishop and Primate of the Anglican Province of South-East Asia

The Bishop of Singapore, Dr Titus Chung, has now been installed to the headship of the Anglican Church in the whole of South-East Asia. The ceremony took place on January 23rd in St Andrew's Cathedral in Singapore. (For those not familiar with St Andrew's, it stands on a whole block of central Singapore, at the City Hall MRT station, only a block away from Raffles' Hotel.)

Dr Chung studied at Trinity Theological College, Singapore, and then at the University of Edinburgh. He was ordained as a priest in 1997 and became Bishop of Singapore in October 2020. As Bishop of Singapore his diocese includes Indonesia.

The Archbishopric and Primacy is a four-year appointment, and Titus Chung is the seventh appointment since it was created in 1996. He continues also in the rôle of Bishop of Singapore. He is 59.



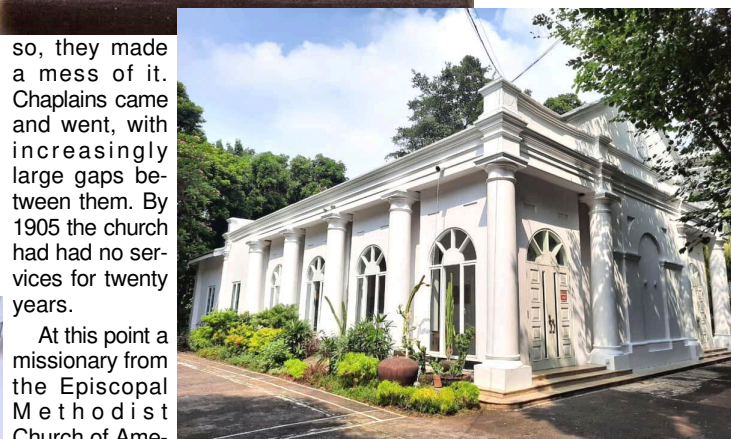
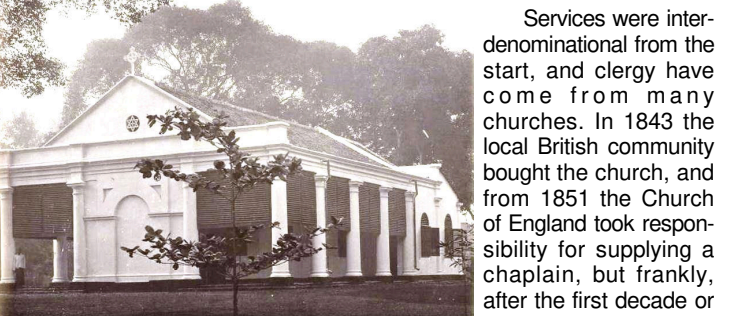
Above: The Bishop of Singapore, now Archbishop and Primate (right); on the left his predecessor, Bishop Melter Tais of Sabah



New Vicar of All Saints' Anglican Church, Jakarta

Our good friend Rowan has been asked to be the Vicar of All Saints', a position that has been vacant since early 2020. This is a substantial new responsibility, but after much prayer he has agreed.

The history of All Saints' started with the purchase of land in Menteng in central Jakarta by the London Missionary Society. It was intended that it should be a home base for missionaries to the particularly difficult areas of China and Japan. The Rev'd John Slater was sent out, a bamboo church was erected and worship services started. Unfortunately John Slater 'went off the rails'. He resigned in 1822 and was replaced by the Rev'd Walter Medhurst, who set up a printing press, schools and an orphanage. His replacement of the bamboo church with the present brick building seems to have started in 1828; it was fully opened in 1831, making it considerably older than St John's. Similarly to St John's, it was rendered, and there were some later additions—the porch, vestry, chancel and sanctuary—at various later times.



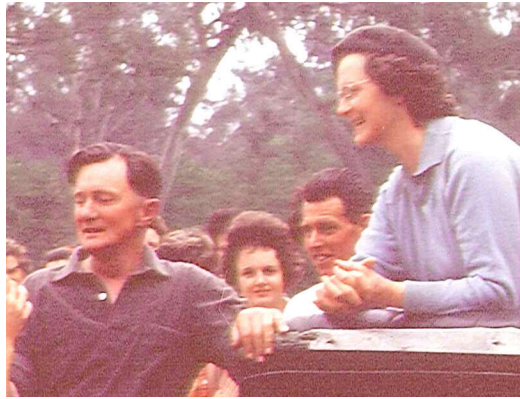
so, they made a mess of it. Chaplains came and went, with increasingly large gaps between them. By 1905 the church had had no services for twenty years.

At this point a missionary from the Episcopal Methodist Church of America, the Rev'd J.R. Deynes, stepped in. Though he lived 50 km away in Bogor (then Buitenzorg), he commuted by an early train each Sunday to take a 10 am service. Furthermore, he arranged for a Dutch Methodist, Mr A.T. Keen, to be licensed by the Bishop of Singapore as a Lay Reader. Mr Keen not only kept the place going after J.R. Deynes left in 1907 until a new appointment was made in 1910, but he continued taking services until he retired home in 1928.

The new appointment in 1910 occurred because the Bishop of Singapore took over from the ineffectual English authorities, and founded the 'Java Chaplaincy', effectively a parish 1000 km long.

The property is now owned by the Indonesian Council of Churches, and administered by the 'All Saints' Anglican Church Council'. It is self-funded.

There is a connexion with St Andrew's Rosanna. In February 1973 the Rev'd Eric Constable, having lost his wife in 1971, retired from being Vicar of St Andrew's, and made himself available for locum work. He had always been interested in overseas missions, and took up a locum position in Isfahan, Iran, and, following that, a three months locum position at All Saints' Jakarta in 1974. He had been there three weeks when two well-dressed men came to the vicarage asking for a blessing. When he received them, they knifed him to death, and also the watchman who came to his aid.



Eric and Clair Constable

The murder was always described as a robbery gone wrong, even though nothing was taken. But in 2000 an Indonesian book appeared that included an interview with one of the men. There had been a lot of people converting from Islam to Christianity, and the radical Islamists were very unhappy. The last straw for them was when President Suharto agreed to host an international assembly of the World Council of Churches. They decided they would kill one Christian pastor a month until the assembly was cancelled. Constable was the first martyr, and after his killing, Indonesia quietly told the World Council of Churches to go elsewhere (they met in Nairobi); but of course the government did not want to be seen as movable by violence.

All Saints' now has Sunday services at 7.30 am (traditional) and 9 am (contemporary), and also morning and evening prayer (6 am and 8.30 pm) most days, with a special service on Wednesday nights. Some services are livestreamed.



In addition to the main church in Menteng, there has also been since 1993 a plant in South Jakarta, near the International Schools, and this has a contemporary service at 10.30 am each Sunday, using a space in a school there.

Rowan says:

Although in this new role I will not be visiting the other churches in the city where I live as often as I previously did, I am pleased that I will be able to continue meeting regularly with the pastors and clergy of

those churches to continue mentoring and supporting them, as well as continuing to serve as a member of the translation team.

All Saints Anglican Church Jakarta currently has 3 congregations across 2 campuses. While the makeup of each of the congregations varies, broadly speaking the church as a whole consists of 60% Indonesians (of varying ethnic groups) and 40% expats (including Nigerian, Kenyan, South Korean, Indian, Singaporean, English, Scottish, American, Canadian). I am the sole Australian!

I value your prayers as I prepare to be inducted as the Vicar of All Saints Anglican Church Jakarta by the Bishop of Singapore and the Dean of Indonesia at a special

service on Sunday 10th March.

Rowan reports that there was a bilingual Communion service at 11 pm on Christmas Eve as well as two services on Christmas Day in the morning (one at each campus). He says, 'This special bilingual Christmas Eve service has become increasingly popular over the past few years since we started it, particularly amongst younger Indonesians. We are praying that they might choose to make the church their regular place to worship and fellowship.'

There was a weekend retreat at the end of January: 79 attended (picture below). Fifteen of these are attending baptism and confirmation classes. Three teenagers and two adults will be baptised on Sunday 25th February, and twelve young people and adults will be confirmed in a bilingual service by the Archbishop on Saturday 9th March, along with 30 young people and adults from five other local Anglican churches. We are asked to keep these people in our prayers.

No earthly home

Rowan says: *Currently, there are around 14,000 or more registered asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia, some from nearby countries such as Myanmar, others from countries further away, such as the Middle East. Some Anglican churches here have established ministries to reach out to and support these asylum seekers and refugees as they await resettlement in countries such as Australia and Canada, providing them with pastoral care, as well as assistance in learning English, and developing IT and other skills.*

In early January I was privileged to baptise one such asylum seeker, who with his family, left their country of origin because of religious persecution. Please pray for W and his parents K and J, that W will grow in his faith, that the family's English literacy and fluency will improve, and that they will continue to trust God for the future, including on their resettlement to a third country.

International ministry opportunity

To help strengthen and develop the ministry of All Saints Anglican Church Jakarta, the church is seeking to appoint one or two interns for twelve months to assist with Sunday services as well as the youth and young adult ministries.

Although unemployment and under-employment are both high in Indonesia, it has been historically difficult for churches to find suitable interns to serve as part of a ministry team and gain practical experience in ministry. Please do pray that God would raise up the right people to serve here.



Blokes Helping Blokes

Blokes Helping Blokes met again on 3rd February at the Heidelberg MacDonald's Party Room. Glen Farrington once more presided, as his nose is a good deal better (in the sense of not bleeding, not to look at). Because he is on the well-known rat poison warfarin, Glen was advised to go about with oil up his nose. Allan, though not on warfarin, was similarly advised.

It is not clear to the Editor what the purpose of the oil might be. Captain Blackadder famously put pencils in his nose, but the Editor has not seen either Glen or Allan perform this activity, and is not sure they would require lubrication in any case. Perhaps the idea is that the boogers will slide out and not need to be removed by picking.

At any rate, instead of using cheap 15W-40 engine oil from Coles (or even the lighter 10W-30), it transpired that these gentlemen were squirting sesame oil up there, possibly to keep their options open. Glen also mentioned that he was using Vaseline, but he didn't say exactly where.

Glen then told us an anecdote about misplacing his phone. (The Editor is not sure of the segue here—perhaps Glen kept his phone up his nose, but now it kept slipping out.) Knowing that Apple's not-very-intelligent AI Siri would obey his every word, Glen kept asking, 'Where are you, Siri?', to which Siri kept replying, 'I'm here', while disguising its voice so that Glen could not tell where it came from, thereby showing a certain amount of sentience.

Glen warned us that because of the oil up his nose, when we saw it dribbling out, we were not to jump to the conclusion that his brain tissue was leaving for a more congenial environment with more company. To prove that he still had all his marbles, he took an order for three beverages to the nearby counter. In this, however, he failed, as by the time he reached the counter he had forgotten the original order, and had to guess (quite incorrectly, and with no milk for the tea).

Some readers may point out, quite reasonably, that given the establishment in question, if the coffee tasted like tea it probably just meant the server had given you hot chocolate. If presented by a competent barrister this argument would certainly have convinced the jury; however Glen had forgotten Rumpole's advice and pleaded guilty.

Paul Smith told us he had been homeless all of 2023, having sold his former house (which had stairs, which he now can't handle) rather a long time before his new apartment was built. He had been couch-surfing the whole year at the homes of various friends (or erstwhile friends), living out of one bag while all his other stuff was locked down in storage. Glen said he was very glad most of his house had fallen down in the earthquake, so he couldn't offer Paul a room. Paul was contemplating sleeping under bridges when he managed to persuade the apartment owner to let them in early, but it meant he had no air-conditioning for a week and a half, which wasn't good in a modern apartment that is all window. (Glen retorted that he had had no air-conditioning, and no heating, for two years, hinting that in his opinion Paul was in fact living in the lap of luxury.) Paul is on the third floor with nice views, which is all very good until the lift breaks down.

David Fitzgerald told us about his *Kids' Hope* kid. (Our parish used to be involved in this programme: a volunteer spends an hour a week with a primary school student who needs a mentor.) He had started when his mentee was in Prep, but when he moved up to high school, the school asked that the arrangement continue. Now he has started Year 9 and he told David there would be four more years, indicating his intention to finish Year 12. David is very proud of his

progress, but we are also proud of David's work, without which a troubled youth was likely to go off the rails. Instead the school now gives him the responsibility of making announcements over the school's PA system—and we can imagine how that could go wrong with someone with less self-discipline, like the Editor. He is also on the school's interview panel for new teachers, something that did not happen in any of the Editor's schools. And yet this student still doesn't know where he will sleep each night, as he is shuffled around by relatives.

Various members related various medical issues that will not be discussed in detail here, but which showed how much some members and their wives had to put up with.

Glen is of course engaged in unusual food preparation. His latest achievement is 'dry hanging' of meat, a process in which meat is aged at 2°C for many months, during which certain constituents are broken down and the result is astonishingly tender and, according to Glen, tastes like nothing you have had before, which the Editor can well believe.

Glen gave details of the treatment of some particular cut of steak, which also included two separate lengthy soakings in tubs of brandy. Glen apparently has a quantity of casks of various spirituous liquors hanging about his house, not (he says) because he is engaged in smuggling of same, but because he uses them to soak the dried fruit for his Christmas puddings in. He particularly mentioned soaking stuff in tubs of Grand Marnier.

Glen mentioned that he had attempted to gastronomically educate a young man who ate only pork chops and olives, which he believed made him attractive to women. (Members took careful notes.) Glen didn't believe this worked.

Glen asked the Editor to explain quantum entanglement, and the Editor attempted, but failed. This led Glen to speculate about the size of the unit of length, the poofteenth. He attempted to ask Siri, but Siri deliberately kept on mishearing him.

Jon told us about a Heidelberg dog-walking group, which had developed by degrees into a close-knit social group. They had their own Whatsapp group, and when someone went into the water after their dog who was in difficulties the group was activated, and various superheroes rolled up to the rescue.

There was general discussion of the importance of belonging to a group. Someone said that storytelling could be an important part of making a group, which heartened the Editor, that if he is telling a terrible story, it doesn't diminish his glory.

It was time to go—but where was Frank, to tell us our going-home joke? He wasn't there; and indeed he hadn't been there right from the beginning. (The Editor happens to know why he wasn't there, but for reasons of respect for the privacy of a fellow-member he is unable to reveal that he wasn't there because he forgot.) So Glen asked Siri to tell a joke; but the result was completely unsatisfactory, as the joke was clean and thoroughly forgettable.

The next *Blokes Helping Blokes* will be on 2nd March at the Heidelberg McDonald's, 120 Bell St Heidelberg (or enter from Francis St), 8.45–10.30 am. All blokes are welcome! Enquiries: Glen 0487 852 808.

P.S. The blokes were disturbed later to learn that David Taylor was in hospital. David is a *BHB* legend, in that during Covid, while he was confined to his cell in a high-security nursing home, Glen (or, as he was known then, Glenn), in a daring feat of mercy, was able to smuggle in large quantities of red wine under the very noses of sharp-nosed matrons.

It was, the Editor, believes, these acts of criminality that forced Glenn (as he then was) to attempt to avoid the attentions of Victoria's finest by disappearing from their radar, by living under a new name.

'Cursed is He that Removeth His Neighbour's Land-Mark': A Fearful Ash Wednesday Litany

Andrew Davison

Posted 14 Feb 2018



Andrew Davison is Starbridge Lecturer in Theology and Natural Sciences in the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge.

Say what you will about liturgical worship, but it certainly keeps the Bible in front of you.

Substantial scripture readings are usually laid down, and even the parts of worship that aren't Bible readings are often a tapestry of Biblical quotations or allusions, woven together.

As a rule of thumb, the more traditional the rite, the truer that is.

As a child, and a teenager, I sang in my parish church choir. Because of that, I can vouch that the Book of Common Prayer is full of material, much off the beaten track, that makes good reading during a dull sermon. There's the list of who you can't marry, for instance: "A Table of Kindred and Affinity, Wherein Whosoever Are Related Are Forbidden in Scripture and Our Laws to Marry Together."

And there is the Commination.

The Commination service was composed for use on this very day of the year, on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, although in the twenty-first century not one parish in a hundred does so. The subtitle explains why: it is a "Denouncing of God's Anger and Judgements against Sinners." Few in number are Anglicans in the UK who think that's a good use of a Wednesday morning.

The Commination service turns out to be a greatest hits compilation of exhortations from the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible – "gathered out of the seven and twentieth chapter of Deuteronomy, and other places of Scripture," as the introduction puts it. Pulling no punches, it begins with nine curses: "Cursed is he that curseth his father or mother," it starts off. (The people reply "Amen.") "Cursed is he that taketh reward to slay the innocent" is another. (Again, "Amen.")

One curse has stuck in my mind, right back to being a chorister taking refuge from bad homiletics: "Cursed is he that removeth his neighbour's land-mark." It has a peculiarly alien ring to it, perhaps because the word "landmark" now suggests only a building of historical interest. Cursed is he that moveth the Chrysler Building? The Hebrew, however, refers to the boundary of a homestead, and to the signs that marked it out: most likely stones. For us, such markers are obsolete. We have land registration offices instead.

Even properly updated, to "Cursed is he or she that removeth a neighbour's land-mark," is this not the least relevant part of an

altogether forgotten service in an old prayer book? It is not: rather, moving a neighbour's landmark turns out to be the crime of the century. And it is going on right now, perpetrated by most of the world's richest people, against many of its poorest. It is happening because of climate change, and rising oceans.

Consider the country of Kiribati, northeast of Australia. Today, it is principally marked out as the first nation, each day, to see the rising sun. It is also likely to be the first nation to disappear beneath the waves. Residents of the Maldives also have a lot to worry about. Their islands lie an average of four feet above sea level (and falling). Samoa, the Solomon Islands and parts of Micronesia are also being eaten away.

The Bible is not the only ancient document to worry about displaced landmarks. The theme is found across Ancient Near Eastern literature, and in Plato's *Laws*. In one way, it stands as a defence of private property, but in the Bible's Hebrew law it is also a defence of the "communal fabric," as Walter Bruggemann has put it: moving a boundary marker is "a most elemental violation of the community."

As surely as if we were dragging marker stones around in the dead of night, each of us who contributes to climate change is depriving people of their land. Indeed, the people we are depriving of their ancestral lands are, all the more tragically, among the least polluting people in the world. That is surely a sobering thought for the beginning of Lent.

I leave it to Jewish readers to determine what it means for someone to be a "neighbour" in their own tradition, from which that strangely contemporary curse is drawn. Christians have the term defined for them by Jesus: a neighbour is a person in need and, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, a neighbour is whoever "who shows mercy." In this case, we might want to ask the resident of Kiribati or Samoa to show mercy on us, not vice versa.

The Commination service comes from a different world, and even by 1662, it was probably beginning to look like a grey gothic relic among the newer wings, or quadrangles, of the Prayer Book's buildings. All the same, the purpose of the Commination leaps vividly from that age to our own. It was written:

"to the intent that, being admonished of the great indignation of God against sinners, ye may the rather be moved to earnest and true repentance; and may walk more warily in these dangerous days."

I have no idea what any particular reader will make of the idea that we stand under God's judgement. There may well be, however, a wider sense of agreement that we could do to "walk more warily in these dangerous days," and to amend our lives accordingly. To that we might answer, as the Commination expects for each part of its fearful litany, "Amen."

<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/cursed-is-he-that-removeth-his-neighbours-land-mark-a-fearful-as/10094982>

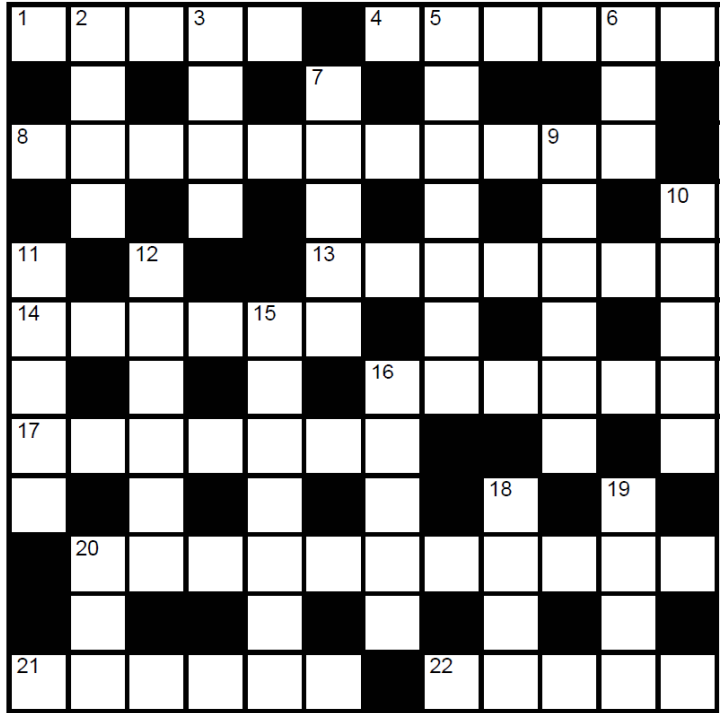


Across

- 1 Candle sight (5)
- 4 Product of farming (6)
- 8 Lois for example (11)
- 13 Serpent for example (7)
- 14 Nephilim, Rephaim etc. (6)
- 16 Land of milk and honey (6)
- 17 Considers (7)
- 20 Sect in Revelation (11)
- 21 Shrub (6)
- 22 Talks to God (5)

Down

- 2 Ancient harp (4)
- 3 Herb (4)
- 5 One of the Herods (7)
- 6 Malchus lost his (3)
- 7 Hebrew measures (5)
- 9 Miracle worker (6)
- 10 Water holes (5)
- 11 Greek gathering place (5)
- 12 Old prophet (6)
- 15 Commotion (7)
- 16 A promised son and heir (5)
- 18 Heavenly body (4)
- 19 It's a sin (4)
- 20 Negative (3)



by Philologus

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

Unscramble the letters to find the words in our

Esther the Queen Anagram

www.dltk-kids.com



- aberv _____
- acegoru _____
- ehijsw _____
- eenqu _____
- aeprry _____
- acdeimor _____
- adesv _____
- cnorw _____
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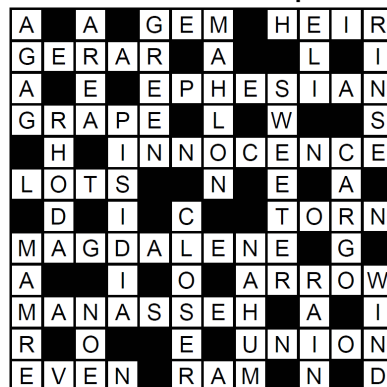
Bible Word Search – Crucifixion

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_Crucifixion_0.htm

- Accused, Angeles, Beaten, Betrayed, Blood, Bowed head,
- Brother, Cast lots, Commit, Cross, Crown, Denied, Father,
- Finished, Forsaken, Hands, Heaven, Holy Spirit, Innocent, Jesus,
- Kiss, Lies, Mary, Ministering, Mocked, Money, Mother, Paradise,
- Peter, Pierced, Prayers, Priests, Robe, Side, Soldiers, Son, Soul,
- Stripes, Tears, Thieves, Thorns, Whipped

Answers to last month's puzzles



Bible Word Search mystery answer:
BLESSINGS

Last month's anagram:

- aalswy always
- acdiilnnootu unconditional
- dgo God
- aceilps special
- aaegp agape
- corss cross
- eeeimns enemies
- ceeprst respect
- beghinor neighbor
- efgiorv forgive

Victory in Jesus

Epiphany 4

28th January 2024, 9.30 am Holy Spirit

Deuteronomy 18:15–20; Mark 1:21–28

Sermon by Helen McAlley

Mark 1:21–28

²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴ 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!'

²⁵ 'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' ²⁶ The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.' ²⁸ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

MY INITIAL REACTION

When I first read the Gospel reading for today, I thought, 'Oh, no! I don't want to preach about an evil spirit. Let me preach on something more positive.' However I decided to speak about our enemy Satan after all.

SATAN

Many Christians don't like to speak about the devil, or Satan, as he is called. We prefer more pleasant topics or Bible verses. We like the verses which speak of love, joy, peace etc. and, of course, those are also very important verses too.

I think we don't like to talk about the enemy because we might feel some fear about him. How are we to react when confronted by the enemy? We would rather not even think about it. The apostle Peter said the enemy is like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Ouch! If I were to be confronted by a roaring lion, I know I'd be looking for somewhere to escape from this animal which could literally kill me and eat my body. I would be no match for it at all.

The apostle Paul calls the enemy 'the god of this world' with all sorts of power to harm and destroy.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SATAN

Many years ago now, when I was studying English literature at the university, we had to read *Paradise Lost* – a very long poem by the poet John Milton. My lecturer commented that Satan, in this poem by this very Christian poet, seemed almost noble: evil, yes, but somehow he had a greatness. Compared to Satan, Jesus Christ as presented in the poem seemed uninteresting and colourless. They were presented as equals, fighting battles, which they were equally likely to win.

And that is how those of us who are in the church may tend to see Jesus and Satan – as equals fighting a battle which has yet to be determined. Not true!

Another trap we can fall into is to disbelieve in the existence of Satan and his angels called demons. C.S. Lewis, the famous 20th century Christian writer, wrote in his preface to his book *The Screwtape Letters*, 'There

are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about devils. One is to disbelieve their existence. The other is to believe and feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them'. In other words, we can be like an ostrich burying its head in the sand pretending they do not exist or we can become obsessed with them.

HOW DID SATAN GET HIS POWER?

People often ask the question, 'Where does all the evil in the world come from?' We know that God is always perfectly good and loving. It is a difficult and complex question to answer, but we can attribute the evil in the world to Satan who has somehow gained the power and authority to wreak havoc in all sorts of ways.

How did Satan get the authority that he has in the world? We know from the book of Genesis that Adam and Eve were created sinless. There was no sin and no death in the beginning.

But Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, and as a result, death entered into the equation. The apostle Paul wrote, 'Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men (meaning all people), because all have sinned' (Rom 5:12).

Let's go even further back in time from the Garden of Eden to find out where Satan came from. God created Satan and the angels and there was a time before Satan rebelled. Biblical scholars and commentators believe a passage from the Old Testament book of Ezekiel refers to Satan (Ezekiel 28: 12–15):

'You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx and the emerald; and the gold.... You were the anointed cherub, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created.'

It almost sounds like a description of God himself. Note the words 'perfection', 'blameless', 'beauty', 'wisdom'. Satan was in a class of his own. The second part of this passage, however, and a passage from Isaiah 14 describe what happened later:

'But you said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God...I will make myself like the Most High".'

SATAN'S DOWNFALL

Pride and self-absorption caused Satan's downfall. We read in Revelation 12 how Satan was cast out of heaven and managed to convince a third of the angels to follow him. Satan then was the ruler of an army but he had no kingdom. He thought that if he could get Adam and Eve to obey him rather than God, then Adam, and subsequently all of Adam's descendants, would come under his authority. We are slaves to the one we obey, as Paul wrote in Rom 6:16. Satan tempted Adam and got what he wanted: the territorial control of the earth. Adam and Eve relinquished this control to him by choosing to sin. However, God was still in ultimate control. One doctrine says that God limits the evil in this world.

The apostle John wrote that 'the whole world is in the power of the evil one'. Jesus described Satan as a thief who comes only to steal, kill and destroy. He also describes Satan as 'the father of lies'.

That sounds pretty discouraging from our point of view, doesn't it? Are we just the pawns of Satan, helpless against his constant attacks, like someone being attacked by a hungry, roaring lion?

JESUS' VICTORY OVER SATAN

Well no! The good news is that God in Jesus has intervened to give us power over all the attacks of the enemy. Satan will come against us in all sorts of ways as we try to live holy lives, and is especially interested in getting Christians to think that we have no power over him.

The apostle John wrote that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. On the cross, Jesus, the sinless Son of God, paid the price for our sin. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus defeated the devil (and the effects of the cross go backward in time as well as forward). Satan is a defeated foe and that defeat will eventually be seen to be a total one.

THE INCIDENT AT CAPERNAUM

We see Jesus' power over the enemy in our Gospel reading today. Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. It was the custom for visiting speakers to participate in the worship services by invitation of the synagogue leaders. The people listening to Jesus were amazed because he taught as someone who had authority. His authority was directly from God the Father, not from other teachers. Just then, a man under the control of an evil spirit cried out, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God'. This demon recognised correctly that Jesus was a powerful adversary, capable of destroying the forces of Satan. Jesus' name 'the Holy One of God' was maybe used by the demon or demons in accordance with the occult belief that the precise use of a person's name gave control over him. Rather than get into conversation with this demon, Jesus immediately told it to be quiet and come out of the man—literally He said, 'Be muzzled'. And that is what happened immediately, showing Jesus' power over the demons. The people watching said, 'What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives power to evil spirits and they obey Him'.

IN CHRIST WE TOO HAVE AUTHORITY OVER THE ENEMY

Jesus has authority over all the power of the evil one, but what about us? We have a delegated authority over the enemy. All Christians have authority over the evil one. The Bible says quite a few times that we are 'in Christ'. That means that through our salvation, we are intimately connected with Jesus and he gives us the power over the enemy. But we need to understand that we have that power, and many Christians do not understand that. We have that power and authority automatically as Christians, but it is something we have to exercise and practise.

Even before his death on the cross, we read that Jesus sent out the twelve disciples two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. Without Jesus we can do nothing, as Jesus clearly explained in John 15. He goes on to say, 'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it will be given you.' There is a condition here – abiding in Jesus and His words abiding in us.

What is our position when we are 'in Christ'? Paul writes in Ephesians 2 that God the Father 'raised Jesus from the dead and

seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under His feet'. We see from this passage that Jesus is not just equal with the enemy as we might think from reading *Paradise Lost*, but far, far above him. And in the next chapter, Paul goes on to say that we as Christians have been 'raised up with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus'. That's such an important phrase 'in Christ Jesus'. With Christ, we too are far above all power and dominion of the enemy.

The name of Jesus is above every name and it represents Jesus' authority. And we have the right to use that name. We can affirm, 'The name of Jesus is high above all other names – far above all principalities and powers (Satan and his demons), and I have the right to use that name because I am in Christ and His words abide in me.' When we use the name of Jesus, we are using the power and authority of that name over all the power of the enemy.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Whatever situation we are in, because we are 'in Christ' we can have the victory over all the power of the enemy. Are we in a situation where we don't know what to do next? Do we feel oppressed by the enemy? Are we discouraged? Are we battling with grief or illness or unbelief? Is the enemy attacking our thoughts and trying to make us feel hopeless, as he loves to do? In each situation, because we are 'in Christ' we can claim the victory and then act in a way that shows our faith. Instead of saying, this or that situation is hopeless, we can say instead, 'I'm having a difficult time but I'm trusting the Lord for the victory'.

Do we sometimes feel condemned? The Bible says that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We need to recognise that it is the enemy who is giving us that thought. He works in our minds and in our thoughts. Of course the condemnation of the enemy is a very different thing from the conviction of the Holy Spirit who gently reminds us that we have done something wrong and need to confess it and receive forgiveness. Condemnation is harsh and that is the nature of the enemy who Jesus said came to steal, kill and destroy. If we have confessed our sin and still feel condemned, we need to resist the enemy maybe with Scripture as Jesus did reminding ourselves and our enemy that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and then refusing to accept any condemnation. We may have to resist the enemy more than once and it should become a habit whenever we are aware of any discouraging thoughts which are not in line with the Scriptures.

We need to learn and practise these disciplines until they become a way of life and must ever be on our guard and keep close to Jesus. But always remember that we have the victory in Jesus.

The Bible tells are that we should submit ourselves to God (very important!) firm in our faith and then we can resist the enemy in Jesus' name, knowing that as we do that, he must flee from us (1 Peter 5:9).

Keeping very close to the Lord through prayer and Bible study and also Christian fellowship is also very important. It prevents

the enemy getting a foothold in our life – a metaphor that the apostle Paul uses.

Another way we can resist the enemy is by being thankful and praising God. These are practices that we can choose to do even if we do not feel like it, just as we choose to love someone whom we find unlovable or we choose with God's help to forgive someone who has hurt us, regardless of our feelings.

PRAYER

Shall we pray: *We praise you Lord Jesus for all that you suffered on the cross that we might be released from the penalty and power of our sins, and also that we 'in you' might have victory over all the power of the enemy. Help us to exercise that authority that you have given us. We pray in your wonderful name. Amen.*

Helen McAlley

Mark 1:21–28

4th February 2024

Sermon by Denise Nicholls

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all who were ill and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!'

³⁸ Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come.' ³⁹ So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

On this day, at the start of the year proper—yes, we know that it begins on January 1, but it's sort of a bit of holiday time for most of January, isn't it? The tennis is on, the cricket's on, the sun is shining—sometimes not enough, sometimes too much and we swelter, or we whinge that it's not hot enough. And then we get to February, and school goes back, and all the businesses start again, and it's sort of the end of our summer holidays—which is quite odd, because we go back in what can be the hottest time of the year—but anyway, that's what we do as a community here in Australia.

But this morning, on this first day of our regular services, we meet together for this day of Commissioning, where we recommit ourselves as a church, and as individuals, to our Lord Jesus, and to following him.

We want to follow in the model of our Lord Jesus Christ, and today I want to speak about the two things that the Gospel passage shows to us: how Jesus works on both the physical and the spiritual realm. And so our topic is **Prayer and Proclamation**.

Mark 1, which Elizabeth read for us just now, is a very well-known part of Scripture, at

the very beginning of Jesus' ministry—after all, we're still in Mark chapter 1. So if you have your Bibles there, you could turn them open to Mark 1:29 as I speak on two things: about the spiritual and physical realms that Jesus worked in, and that we, as his people, also live in and occupy and work in.

So we find Jesus at the house of Simon Peter and Andrew, and we hear that Simon Peter's mother-in-law—interesting, isn't it, that we often assume that the disciples weren't married: no, they would have all been married. The normal thing in that society was for people to be married, and as they're travelling around with Jesus they often had their family with them: that would have been quite common. So what's the problem? Peter's mother-in-law is ill; and Jesus deals with her on a physical and spiritual level. He goes to her, in days when a fever could kill you very quickly: the days before antibiotics and antivirals, and a cut could mean infection and death very quickly. When plague spread like wildfire, a fever was not something where you could reach for a Panadol and have a lie down and put the fan on and hopefully the fever passes. No, a fever was life-threatening.

But Jesus goes to her, takes her by the hand, and she gets up. The fever is gone, and she begins to wait on them. Now please don't hear me saying that Jesus caused the fever to leave her because he wanted something to eat, and so she had to do the housewifely duties—not at all! But the fact that she began to wait on them, shows how well she now was: she was able to resume her normal physical existence. Physical: fever leaving her; and the spiritual: Jesus enabling that to happen.

Well, so many people were following Jesus and crowding around, that the Scripture tells us in verse 32: *That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all who were ill and demon-possessed.* It tells us that so many people gathered around it was like the whole town was there. Those who were ill were cured; those who were afflicted were cleansed; and here we see Jesus' power, not only over the physical realm, but also over the spiritual realm. The power that he is Son of God could command the demons—the demons who knew who he was, the Holy One of God—and he stopped them from speaking. Again we see Jesus' physical and spiritual authority.

So here is Jesus exercising a brilliant ministry in a town where everybody is hearing about him. But what is his priority? Look at verse 35: *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.* Here we note Jesus' priority of prayer: listening to, and speaking with, God the Father. Jesus prioritises the spiritual even over the physical. His priority of prayer, over healing, over helping people. For prayer empowers all the things that Jesus did.

You know sometimes we hear people saying, 'I'm so busy, I can't stop', or, 'I can't fit in any time to exercise, or eat properly, or get the rest that I should do'. And yet we know how foolish that is for us as humans. When people feel under the pump at work—and some of you may well feel that—you might think, 'I have to work harder', when often we know that the best thing is to leave—not leave your employ, but to draw a line, go home, have a good meal, play with the

family, and get some rest. And that actually enables us to work much more efficiently.

Jesus emphasizes the importance of prayer for himself as Son of God. Shouldn't it be the same for us?—spiritual people in a physical body, called to be God's children, in relationship with the creator of the universe through the eternal Son. Throughout Scripture, Old Testament and New Testament, we see the priority of God's people always in prayer: calling on God in prayer, listening to God in prayer. In times of joy, sorrow, praise, heart-ache. They pray for wisdom and guidance and help. In times of grief. They confess through prayer, they rejoice through prayer.

And prayer is one of those amazing things for us as God's people, in that it is both physical and spiritual. We're talking with God, we're listening for God and to God through his word.

A number of years ago I worked with someone in a Christian organisation, and one of the key people there wasn't a Christian, and he couldn't understand the fact that we, as a Christian organisation, would pray together every week. He found it quite odd. And one day he said, 'Just go, go and have a little pray'—and I said, 'What do you think we're doing when we pray?' He said, 'You're giving up'; and I said, 'No we're not'. He said, 'Well, you're not putting things into action'. I said, 'We are! But what we're doing when we pray is we pray for wisdom and guidance to move in the right direction.' That was a revelation for him. He thought prayer was just giving up. Not at all! It's engaging with God, listening to our Father.

And so I ask you, as I ask myself, how is your prayer life? Are you praying the Lord's Prayer every day? If you do that, that's a wonderful thing. Do you pray for other things? Do you need a bit of help with knowing how best to pray?

We learn to pray by praying with others. Some people here at church have a wonderful ministry of leading us in prayer—in corporate prayer, to which we can say Amen. We learn to pray by listening with each other. I even bribe you to pray: on the third Saturday of each month we have a prayer meeting, and I make pancakes, so that we can meet together, have something to nourish our bodies—well, indulge our bodies, let's be fair (we do have fruit, that's good too, and yoghurt)—and we pray together. Everyone is welcome to that little prayer breakfast.

If you have a smartphone there are these wonderful apps: there are so many apps that you can get about prayer, that might remind you to pray each day. We as a church have a subscription to something called epray, and each day you could pray the Daily Office: it gives you a Scripture, a Psalm, and opportunities for prayer.

I've been thinking this week about some of our older folk who—and I don't mean anybody here, I mean some of those who now live in aged-care homes and who can't get out, or those who are more housebound. We know that they are still part of our church community, but I've been really thinking, how can we involve them more? I'd really like to ask those people to be praying for us as a church, and as a community. Down at morning tea there'll be a little sign-up sheet, if you're somebody who'd like to be on that prayer support team. And there's no age limit: it doesn't matter how young you are, how old

you are, whether you like praying out loud, or praying quietly. I can send you an email every week, or phone you up if you don't have an email, saying here are some prayer points for this week. Think about that.

We also have those wonderful prayer resources that we get all the time about our link missionaries, our partners in ministry from CMS and BCA.

Prayer: the priority of prayer.

But let's get back to Jesus, and what's happening in this story. Verse 36: remember, Jesus is off in a solitary place praying, and we're told in verse 36: *Simon and his companions went to look for Jesus, and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!' It's like they're saying, 'The crowds are arriving! The next instalment of the Jesus show is ready for the start! Come on Jesus, do your stuff! Show people your power! Show people your authority! Heal people!'*

Now yes, I'm being a bit flippant there, but indeed there would have been genuine inquiries, and very needy people.

But what does Jesus say? It's a bit of a shock when we read it in verse 38: *'Let's go somewhere else', says Jesus, 'To the nearby villages, so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come.'* So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. Prayer gives direction to keep going on with Jesus' task of proclamation, proclaiming the good news of friendship with God: what we call the Gospel, that people can be friends with God.

There are many ministries in our parish that we are involved in. Yes, many are about physical aspects of human life and flourishing, but they are a spiritual service to ourselves and others. We actively proclaim the faith of our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each week when we meet together. At mainly music when the little ones sing the songs about dancing and counting, they also sing songs about how God loves them, and we say grace each week.

When we connect with others who are unwell, when we visit people, when we phone them on the phone to see how they're going, to see how they're travelling with life, and the difficulties of life—that's a physical thing, but it's a proclamation as well of us as Christians wanting to reach out with the good news of Jesus. And caring for them physically as well, when we visit our aged-care homes: when Helen and I go there, we're encouraging our folk in those aged-care homes to keep going on in their faith.

Our youth when we go go-karting, or bowling, or whatever thing we're going to do next—I'm not sure, I'll have to ask Will and Josh. They did give me a list last year, which included everything from getting Elon Musk's submarine and visiting the Titanic, and flying to the moon, to go-karting and bowling again—we'll probably do those. Now they're a great fun thing to do with our youth, and we have fun when we go with them, but we do that so that their spiritual life keeps growing: they're engaging with older Christians who have walked in the faith for longer than they have been walking.

Our op shop ministry is caring for the vulnerable. Praying for our ministry partners is a physical and spiritual thing.

The two keystones that Jesus demonstrates in this short passage in Mark's gospel

are the keystones of **Prayer** and **Proclamation**. And so we, as God's people, followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, want to be like Jesus; and sometimes we might need to prioritise prayer over some of the other things that we are doing, just as Jesus did. Sometimes we might need to stop some things to do other things.

How will we know? God will guide us in prayer.

We as Christians live, and work, and love, and rejoice, on this physical plane; but we are not bound by this physical plane, for we have access to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. As we follow Jesus, our Saviour, our redeemer, our friend, we pray, asking him to guide us, to lead us, to work in us that which is pleasing to the Father. As a church we want to continue being a church of prayer and proclamation, as we pray to God, and proclaim the good news that Jesus came to seek and save all people, those he described as lost without him. We proclaim that Jesus' arms are thrown wide in welcome to all people.

And so on this day of commissioning, my brothers and sisters in Christ, I want to commend to you those two cornerstones for us, those keystones of Prayer and Proclaiming, proclaiming the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ and life through him. Amen.

Mark 1:40–45

11th February 2024

Sermon by Denise Nicholls

⁴⁰ *A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.'*

⁴¹ *Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!'* ⁴² *Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.*

⁴³ *Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴ 'See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.'* ⁴⁵ *Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.*

Well, if we hear of a miraculous healing—and they don't happen very often, but sometimes they do, and it makes news in your local village, the town, or even on the news—or even if we have some exciting news to share of a loved one: a special birthday, an engagement, a marriage coming up, a new baby born—even if it's sad news, we want to share it. This account of Jesus healing a person with leprosy, and Jesus' command to the man *not* to tell of the great news of his healing, raises for us—well for me at least—at least two questions. First of all, why was Jesus indignant at the man's question? And secondly, why did Jesus say, 'Don't tell anyone'?

So I want to look at those two questions, but let's first look at the healing itself. It's a very well-known passage. We know that leprosy in the ancient world was incurable. When the word 'leprosy' is used in Scripture, it could have been used of many different forms of skin disease, some of which were curable, and some of which weren't. So that's why the person would have to go to the priest after their rash or eczema or perhaps

psoriasis was ever cleared up; and some were malignant and would lead to death, and some not.

Today what we know traditionally as leprosy or Hansen's Disease—and Dr Katrina can correct me if the info I got from World Health Organization is incorrect (I'm sure she will)—but it's a chronic, but now curable, infectious disease mainly causing skin lesions and nerve damage. The old thing about people walking along and their arm would drop off—that is not correct; but because the nerves were damaged in the fingers and toes, people wouldn't know that they had damaged—you know, like when you kick your toe on anything, like a bed or something like that, we sure know it, don't we? Well, that reminds us not to do it again: pain is very helpful in that way. But if you have no pain then you can seriously damage yourself.

Leprosy is caused by a bacterium, and it mainly affects the skin, eyes, nose, and peripheral nerves in fingers and toes. The symptoms include light-coloured or red skin patches with reduced sensation and numbness and weakness; but these days it can be cured with 6–12 months of antibiotic and other drug therapy, and early treatment avoids disability.

But throughout the world today there are probably about 2–3 million people still suffering with Hansen's Disease, with leprosy. It's not easily transmissible these days; but it is transmissible if you are living in very close quarters with somebody for an extended period of time. It affects people in the world, in Brazil, India, Indonesia, and occasionally in the developed world; but it can be treated very easily.

We know this parish has had a connection with the Leprosy Mission that still does amazing work in parts of the world. People would collect money in tins, or stamps that would be sold to support the Leprosy Mission. You might remember that the Christmas cards that the parish sent to each of you in this last year came from the Leprosy Mission. (The previous year they came from BCA: we try and mix it up a bit.)

A person who had leprosy, or any skin disease, if they wanted to be cured, they needed the declaration of a priest, and it was quite an involved process for the person to be declared clean; but for malignant leprosy, even in the Scriptures it was said it was as difficult to cure leprosy as raising someone from the dead. How amazing that the Lord Jesus Christ, who did raise the dead, was able to cure the man in our account today!

Well, we know what it's like when we've got an itch—especially the mozzies that are attacking us at the moment—or a rash that won't—you know, that gets under control and then recurs again; but for people in the ancient world with leprosy the impact was on their body, but also upon their social connection. They were excluded from the towns for fear of transmission, and people would back away. No touching! They would be fed by their families, but the food left at a distance.

We know a little bit about that, don't we, with having gone through Covid in the last few years, of putting up screens between us and the people at the shopping centres now, or wearing masks, as is still right to do if you are immunocompromised. I always wear a mask when I'm on a plane, and they always remind us, if the oxygen comes down, you have to take your mask off first. That social distancing that occurred when we were con-

finied to our 5 km bubble. Remember that? Pretty tough, wasn't it? I know when the borders were shut between Victoria and where my family lives in New South Wales, for the first time ever in my life I felt cut off. And when we had the curfew—I never thought I'd live in a country where there was a curfew. You couldn't be out after 9:00 at night to try and stop the spread of this terrible disease that is still impacting upon many in our community.

But in the account that Mark gives us, it's clear that the man with leprosy had heard about Jesus, and he comes to Jesus, and falls on his knees and begs him: *'If you are willing you can make me clean.'* You see in the account there, in verse 41, the first thing that Jesus does before he heals the man: Jesus reached out his hand and touched him. I wonder how long it had been since that man had had another human touch him. A sign of comfort, of friendship, of joy.

We who are old enough remember that in 1989 when Romania was opened up, we saw haunting pictures of little babies who had been left in cots and had been well-fed and -watered, but not touched or cuddled or held; and the impact upon those thousands and thousands of young people: they did not thrive. They survived physically, but they did not thrive, because we need human touch. What do we want to do when we first see a baby? I always want to play with the little toes and fingers—we want to hold them, cuddle them, caress them. Primates groom one another; dogs lean and come in for a pat, and play with each other; and humans need human touch for flourishing.

Isn't that amazing, that Mark records for us, that Jesus touches the man and then cures him. A wonderful expression of the humanity and care of our Lord Jesus, the one who was God with skin on; and gave that wonderful comfort to the man.

And Jesus heals him immediately—which brings us to the first of my questions. What does it say in our text? When the man asks him, or says to him, *'If you are willing you can make me clean'*, verse 41 says: *Jesus was indignant.* In some of our translations of Scripture it says 'compassionate', and, yes, Jesus was compassionate, and there is a bit of debate about this word, and how it's used in this context. But if Jesus was indignant, was he indignant about the man's request for healing? Obviously not, because Jesus heals him. Was Jesus indignant that the man doubted Jesus' willingness to heal? Perhaps; but it's probably more likely, the scholars tell us, that Jesus was indignant at the suffering that this man was going through—the very presence of evil in the world.

Jesus' care is shown in compassion, but Jesus is being confronted with the intense suffering of this man, in this case, who falls at his knees, probably at a distance, and begs Jesus—*'If you are willing'*. He knew that Jesus could heal him, and Jesus heals him.

Question two—and I think this is pretty challenging for me: Why does Jesus heal him and then say, in strong words—you can see in verse 44—*'See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.'* So Jesus heals the man; but a person who could declare the man fully restored into community, so that he could have complete

freedom to re-enter fully in communion with people, was a priest in Jerusalem, about 126 kilometres from where the healing occurred. And the Old Testament laid down the procedure of the sacrifices that had to be given, and the continual examination to ensure that the person could be declared clean: and that took eight days.

People had to act offer sacrifices to God for thanksgiving, and it's interesting Jesus says *'as a testimony to them'*. Again the scholars say it might mean *'as a testimony against them'*. Two other times in Mark, Mark uses this phrase and it's always in a bit of a confrontational way, of Jesus in confrontation with the religious leaders of the day. Perhaps it was Jesus giving advanced notice of his healing activities to the priests in Jerusalem that he would be coming to meet soon.

Well, Jesus says, *'Don't tell'*; but what do you do when you've got exciting news? What do you do? When you've been excluded from something, and now you can say, *'Jesus healed me!'* Well, the man disobeyed, but I think I'm on the side of the man. I think he was pretty excited and joyful and praising God and Jesus. But we see the impact of his actions—the impact upon Jesus' mission of preaching in all the towns. Jesus was no longer able to enter the towns, because everyone had heard about his miraculous healing of even someone with leprosy. And so people kept coming to him, and Jesus had to stay outside of the town.

So whilst Jesus' ministry was definitely one of healing—and isn't it interesting, that Greek word that we use of 'healing' is the same word as 'saving', and Jesus wanted to speak about God's saving work through him. It's a challenge, this passage. Why does he tell the man to be quiet? We see that Jesus' activity was hampered in some way.

But it's a wonderful account, isn't it? A wonderful account of the God with skin on showing that human compassion to someone of great suffering. So, hands up if you've got leprosy today? [*No hands.*] Well we probably don't, so how do we apply this portion of Scripture to ourselves? Number one, we can ask Jesus for healing, and miraculous healing is possible, though it is unusual. After all, Jesus did not heal every single person who was on the earth, when he was on the earth. Healing is possible. It's fine to pray for healing, and it's not about you, and your lack of faith, or lack of prayers, or the right prayers, or praying in the right place, whether or not healing occurs. Because we know for all of us the ravages of years, of life, of sin, claim us all in the end.

But the second thing I think we can look at this passage for, is the importance of asking questions about the text of Scripture. Now we said, *'Well, why did Jesus say that?'* To have an inquiring mind, to bring our questions, as the man smitten with leprosy came with a sort of a question to Jesus: *'If you're willing?'* We can bring our questions to God. We can question things in Scripture. That's a good and right thing to do.

So to deepen our understanding—not to be like people who simply throw away something: *'Oh, I don't believe that because of this.'* But if we're having trouble with a section of Scripture, really delve into it. Ask. That's one of the things why we have Bible study. We actually don't just sit there and read the Scripture—we really try and wrestle with it, and what it's meaning to us today.

Well, thirdly, how do we apply this passage to us? Well, as we always turn to the Scriptures, we know that it always tells us at least two things: firstly, something about God; and secondly, something about us humans.

So what does this passage tell us about Jesus? He had compassion for humanity. But he also had the priority of being and preaching about his mission. It tells us that the one who was the Saviour, the cleanser of sin, the restorer of relationship with God, cared about human beings, and cares about all of humanity.

And secondly, what does it tell us about us? It tells us that God is interested in human beings, here and now—the suffering of people, here and now. Which is why the Leprosy Mission still exists—why many other mission organisations still exist—to relieve the suffering of human beings, because they are made in the image of God, people for whom Christ died, human beings worthy of our love and care. From the earliest times of the church, what marked the Christian church out, even in the Roman days, was that counter-cultural care for everyone: for the least in society, for those who are marginalised.

And so what does this passage tell us about Jesus and about us? That God cares about humanity, but he also cares about you, about us as individuals, and, like the leper, we can come and bring our heart to Jesus, bring our heart to God, and we can talk about what's going on in our lives, and God is sure to listen. We may not get the answer that we expect, but we know that we can pour out our heart to God at any time.

Mark 1:9–15

Lent 1, 18th February 2024

Sermon by Denise Nicholls

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan.

¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'

At our Ash Wednesday service this week we had, as is our custom, the imposition of ashes, in the shape of the cross, on our foreheads; we do this to remind ourselves that we are human, mortal, finite; that we come from dust, and we return to dust.

During Lent, we metaphorically walk with Jesus on the road to the cross – the place of Jesus' death and our hope for life eternal.

Today we walk with Jesus into the wilderness, as Jesus begins this time of preparation for his ministry.

The three synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke – all have slight variations of this scene; and we can in our minds meld all these accounts together.

Today, we look at this account in Mark, this part of Scripture, and it is just *two verses*.

Jesus' whole wilderness experience is so brief in Mark's treatment of this episode, but it is *jam-packed!*

Our focus today is: what is **this** evangelist, Mark, telling us about Jesus and about us?

So I will make a couple of observations:

1. There is a Spiritual focus
2. The Physical /Wilderness setting

1. Spiritual focus

Our Bible reading today began with Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan River, and Mark records Jesus seeing heaven 'torn apart', and the *Spirit descending upon Jesus like a dove*. Mark also records that Jesus heard *the voice of God the Father* commending Jesus as the *beloved Son*.

This is a reminder to us that we worship God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit – this is a Trinitarian depiction of God, with the three persons of the Trinity mentioned here in Mark's gospel, the briefest and most action-focused of the gospels.

¹² *At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness*

It is the *Spirit* who sends Jesus to this time of preparation for his ministry into the wilderness. The word 'sent' is a very active verb, meaning, 'drove out', or 'pushed out'.

So Jesus is compelled to go into the wilderness. He goes alone (our children's Bibles make that clear), though his ministry was WITH and ultimately FOR humanity, yet Jesus begins here, alone.

In two short sentences, Mark conveys to us, his readers, the enormity of this event, that it occurs in the spiritual realm. The spiritual confrontation that would characterise Jesus' ministry – all his ministry as he proclaims and enacts the salvation that we call the good news – begins in the spiritual realm.

Mark does not provide us with the details of Matthew or Luke's gospel; he simply states that Jesus was:

v. 13 *in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan.*

Jesus endured not only the frailty and limitations of humanity, but also the cosmic struggle between Jesus the Son and the enigma of God, Satan. As R. T. France states: '*...behind all the earthly scenes in Galilee and Jerusalem lies a supernatural conflict...*'

The conflict that begins here and ends only with Jesus' Cross and Resurrection.

Mark also tells us that the angelic servants of God ministered, attended, to Jesus; not humans, even though the gospel was all about humanity's connection with God.

The spiritual nature of this account is clear. Yet there is also a very significant physical aspect of this episode of Jesus' life.

2. The physical setting: wilderness for 40 days

Wilderness has always been significant in the life of the people of God.

God called his Old Testament people out of the 'wilderness' of slavery in Egypt.

Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai with God as he received the commandments. Elijah in 1 Kings 19, who had fled from Jezebel, spent 40 days in the wilderness and experienced God's miraculous provision of food and water for those 40 days.

And of course, Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness, wandering in a time of testing by God, till they came to the promised land.

So it was important that the One who would deliver Israel, would himself undergo an analogous testing in the wilderness.

The wilderness was a dangerous place for Jesus, hostile in nature, with wild animals, and the presence of Satan.

Have you watched the TV series called *Alone*? People pit themselves against the wildness of nature and animals armed with a few things and have to film themselves looking for water, hunting for food, building a shelter, and trying to survive the longest of the group to win a lot of money – but they don't know how long that will be – and they are alone. I saw the beginning of one series where people boasted about how brave they were, and how long they would last. One competitor lasted only *one* night – as soon as he heard the roar of a mountain lion and could see a wild bear approaching his camp, he hit the button to be rescued!

For us today, wild animals are great to see in a documentary, or in a controlled environment, such as a zoo or a safari – but they are frightening in nature. Australians are rightly fearful of crocs and sharks, even though sharks only account for about 10 deaths per year in the world – and 150 people are killed each year by falling coconuts! In fact, the most dangerous animal on our planet today is the mosquito, which kills, through malaria, over 750,000 people every year! But back to Jesus in the wilderness.

Jesus the Son of God repeats or relives *perfectly* the experience of God's Old Testament people, as he endures this time of wilderness testing. In doing so, Jesus shows himself as the *true* obedient Israelite, the *true* obedient human being.

Jesus underwent a baptism of repentance in his identification with sinful humanity; and as W. M. Lane states,

In the wilderness Jesus confronts the horror, the loneliness and the danger with which the wilderness is fraught...

Israel's rebellion in the wilderness led to death and alienation from God; Jesus' obedience in the wilderness led to life, and the establishment of the new people of God.

CONCLUSION

What does this episode in Jesus' life and ministry teach us about Humanity?

Firstly, that we *need* saving spiritually; that there is a cosmic battle between Jesus and Satan for the souls of humanity.

What does this episode in Jesus' life and ministry teach us about Jesus?

That Jesus was willing to be counted among humans, that he would willingly walk the life and road of humanity; and that Jesus would endure confrontation with Satan here, and throughout his ministry, for our sake.

And this confrontation would only end with Jesus' ultimate sacrifice for us at the cross, and his mighty resurrection – where he would ultimately defeat Satan.

So this Lent, let us give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, for his wilderness testing, and his triumph over Satan – for us.

Parish Council Notes

Meeting of Monday 19th February

Ministry matters

- Appointment/s to Parish Council/Wardens by vicar: parishioner approached, to be sent info.
- Forwarded advertising material to both theol. colleges for a half-time assistant minister.
- Possible employment of a P/T office assistant.

Finance report

- Held over to March meeting.

Property matters

- Two tenders received for St John's car park: being followed up by David Wagner, then submission to Diocese for decision. Urgent so we don't lose remaining funds from NELP grant.
- Sale process of St Andrew's is ongoing.

Child Safety Officer, Family Safety Champion

- Judy Thomson will serve in these two roles.

Diocesan professional standards

- All members of Parish Council must complete Stages I, II, III of Safe Ministry Training: affects two new members. Child Safety Officer needs to complete Stage III: booked.

Vicar's report

- Great to have Christmas 2023 with Dad.
- I had a great time away in Yamba with my friends. I feel refreshed and I'm looking forward to this year with joy.
- Coping OK with everything at the moment—possible admin help by 20-year-old student.

- Contacted Ridley and Trinity Colleges about possible student ministers.
- Christmas services: amazing work by wardens and Sarah and bishops.
- 1 Feb 2024 my 6-year anniversary of being vicar here; 13 Feb 2024 anniversary of my ordination: 30 years in ministry.
- Summer services: farewells and great work by Helen McAlley.
- Syd's ashes at church for interment; death of Gwen Matheson.
- Discussion with Rev'd Di Nicolios (previous Archdeacon): Vicar should **never** have access to church safe or handle money—Treasurer, wardens, Parish Councillors can do this. Change passcode?
- *Diocesan commitments:* Cathedral Chapter meetings: often on Zoom. Area Dean for Yarra Plenty for 3 years.
- Great help from Rhonda in the office. Struggling with the website: trying to contact Weebly to have access moved to me from Jono.
- *Added in discussion:* Seeking a student for 2024.

Wardens' report

- *Watsonia*
 - Repair to cover on hanging light fitting and bitumen shaved to prevent tripping hazard.
 - Faulty light fitting in op shop office repaired.
 - Vicarage inspected after tenants vacated, plans to make ready for re-lease.
- *Rosanna*
 - Two concrete flower pots sold to local resident.

- Ongoing negotiations re sale.
- Repairs at Vicarage to make ready to re-lease: curtains, carpet, blinds, shed, steps, locks, exterior, gardening. Vicarage now leased. Special thanks to Kaye for hard, persistent and multi-dimensional work plus clever solutions.
- Ted and Biddy Colvin timber bench seat brought to St John's at request of their daughter.
- *Heidelberg*
 - Two boom lift inspections with builder, structural engineer assessing bell tower. Now seeking the best repair solution. Area around tower to remain cordoned off until repairs completed.
 - Thanks to Andrew Fegan for arranging 3 split systems in Upper Hall: grants from Kate Thwaites MP, Banyule Council & Crystal Dunn's bequest.
 - Tender process for car park repairs in progress.
 - Faulty dishwasher at Gloucester Dve replaced.
- *Added in discussion:*
 - Two of the vicarages became vacant during Jan and Feb. After significant repairs, Invermay Grove re-leased, new tenants 2 Mar. Watsonia Vicarage vacated 12 Feb: much work required: will commence soon.

General business

- Hire agreement for AA needs reviewing urgently, and payment followed up.
- Parish Council previously agreed to installation of an indigenous art display around St John's grounds near the Community Garden. Much discussion; Parish Council endorses the new direction planned. Talking with Banyule Council's First Nations Lead, drafting an invitation.

Minutes by Rhonda Taylor, précis by Editor

OBSERVING LENT

LESS DEMANDING OPTIONS



ALLOW SUNDAYS AS 'FEAST DAYS'



DECIDE THAT SUNDAY STARTS AFTER EVENING PRAYER ON SATURDAY

Lost Load

A truck loaded with thousands of copies of Roget's Thesaurus crashed yesterday, losing its entire load. Witnesses were stunned, startled, aghast, taken aback, stupefied, confused, shocked, rattled, paralysed, dazed, bewildered, mixed up, surprised, awed, dumbfounded, nonplussed, flabbergasted, astounded, amazed, confounded, astonished, overwhelmed, horrified, numbed, speechless, and perplexed.

Meanwhile, those waiting for the shipment were at a loss for words

Submitted by Janet Anderson-McKay

A man took his dog into a pub, bought a pot and settled down to watch football on the TV set above the bar.

It was the game between Carlton and the Kangaroos.

After a one-sided match, Carlton lost, and the dog said, 'Oh no, not again!'

The barman, startled, walked over to the owner and said, 'Did your dog just say, "Oh no, not again"?'

'Yes', replied the owner blandly, 'he always says that when Carlton plays badly.'

'What does he say when Carlton wins?'

'Don't know—I've only had him for three years.'

Submitted by Frank Webb

STOP PRESS

**Rev'd Catriona Johnson
Priest in the Church of God**



Submitted 24/2/2024 by Denise Nicholls