

# BANYULE BABBLE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGLICAN PARISH OF BANYULE

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

NOVEMBER  
2020

Office: 1 Burgundy Street Heidelberg 3084 ph. 9457 1144

Ministers: Denise Nicholls 0438 856 376  
Helen McAlley 0447 372 972

Patrick Senn 0411 028 360

Internet: www.banyuleparish.org.au

email banyuleparish@gmail.com

Editor (author of all unsigned articles): Peter McKay 9459 5852 petergmckay@hotmail.com

## DENISE'S DATELINE

**L**IKE you, I am praying for the end of the COVID-19 pandemic that has been infecting our world for nearly 12 months now, so that we can 'go back to normal'. However, those among us who have lived through previous epidemics of influenza, polio, tuberculosis and the like, know that a new normal eventually comes – though it is never quick enough – and the effects of the disease leave people scarred physically, psychologically and spiritually; but a sense of 'normality' did return eventually, but life was changed for everyone.

It is good to remember that God is sovereign, and has always been able to use even times like these, of waiting and hoping and praying, to prepare his people for new opportunities to serve God and our world. Think of Noah in the building of the ark, and then the months of waiting for it to come to rest; Jesus in the wilderness before he began his public ministry. I wonder how God might be using this year to prepare us as his Church for the future?

Let's think for a moment of the things that have become normal for us so far in 2020.

### Meetings by Zoom

**Sunday Club** Each Sunday of school terms for the last 5 months or so, I have met online by zoom with children of our parish for an hour for activities in **Sunday Club** – games, Bible stories, activities and prayer. This has been embraced by the children and their families as a way of us connecting while we have been apart. We have also had a new family join us because of this initiative. *I am hoping and praying that this will continue – probably on a different day – even when we can resume our Sunday Church services.*

**Bible Study** Our Thursday Bible study group that previously met at Holy Spirit on Thursdays (1:30 pm–3:00 pm) has also moved online. It is a different dynamic, but we have been able to see each other's faces and connect with each other somewhat. Again, this online meeting has grown in number since we have adopted this method. *I am hoping and praying that the numbers of people attending a Bible study group might grow in 2021, that those who can't physically attend a group, might join an online Bible study group that meets weekly or fortnightly one evening.*

**Monthly Prayer meetings** While we have not been able to share pancakes for brekky before our monthly prayer gatherings, we have been able to join together for prayer in the last couple of months – yes it was a little strange initially, but it does allow us to encourage each other in praying especially for Mission – local, national and international. *I am hoping and praying that in 2021 our monthly prayer meetings will grow in number, with people meeting both in person, and by Zoom.*

### Recorded Services

After a very steep initial learning curve, we have now been recording our services for 6 months, with very few hiccups. A simple service of Morning Prayer with two hymns accessed via our website, or email, or YouTube and distributed to a handful of folk via DVD, means that we have kept the rhythm of corporate weekly worship. Many people have commented how helpful it has been to participate in worship together, even though we are apart. In fact the DVD distribution to three care homes in our parish (Iris Grange, Strathalan and Regis Macleod) has meant that the folk in these care homes have been able to join us in worship each week. *I am*

*hoping and praying that in 2021 we may be able to provide such online services alongside our gathered corporate worship.*

### Prayer at home

A number of us have used the resources prepared for us by Patrick Senn to be more consistent in our own personal times of prayer. The use of these, along with our Anglican prayer books and the online resource of ePray (which can also be accessed via our phones) have assisted us in the disciplines of daily prayer and Bible readings, allowing us to continue to build ourselves as the people of God. *I am hoping and praying that in 2021 we can continue to grow as people of prayer, seeking God's leading for our lives as individuals and as a church.*

In 2020 we have all learned new lessons of resilience and reliance on God, new skills in using technology, and drawn on the gifts with which God has blessed us; may we see this time as fruitful for our spiritual lives, and continue to seek to grow as the people of God.

Yours in Christ,  
Denise

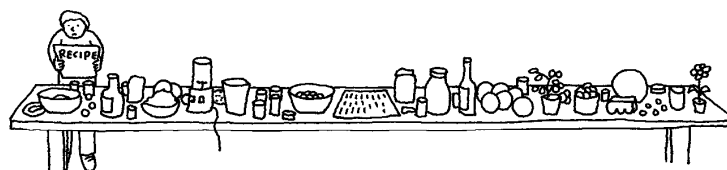


## ADVENT

WE LOOK FORWARD



WE PREPARE



WE WAIT



## This Month – November

**Sunday 1st** All Saints / Trinity 21 / Pentecost 22

Wisdom 3:1–10; Hebrews 12:1–7

**Sunday 8th** Trinity 22 / Pentecost 23 with Archbishop!

Psalm 78:1–7; 1 Thessalonians 4:9–18; Matthew 25:1–13

**Sunday 15th** Trinity 23 / Pentecost 24

Psalm 90:1–12; Matthew 24:36–51

**Sunday 22nd** Trinity 24 / Pentecost 25 / Christ the King

Psalm 93; Matthew 21:1–11

**Sunday 29th** Advent 1 / St Andrew: Annual Meeting

Isaiah 1:1–9; Psalm 12; Luke 12:35–48

## Next Month – December

**Sunday 6th** Advent 2

Malachi 3:1–10; Psalm 87; Luke 1:5–25

## Wanted

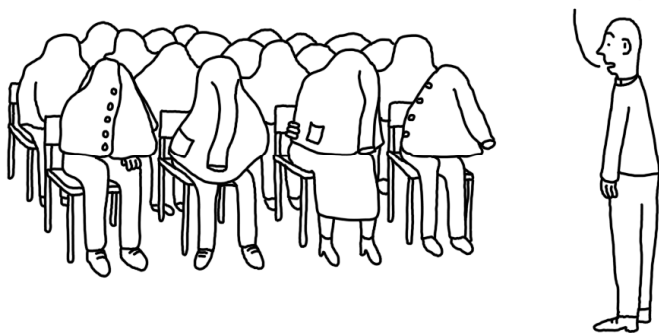
- People to keep in touch with other people
- Another churchwarden
- New volunteers for the op shop

## Money: September

Income:	Giving:	\$8,088.50
	Other:	\$20,707.00
	Total:	\$28,795.50
Expenses:		\$11,401.88
<b>Surplus:</b>		<b>\$17,393.62</b>

Giving was down, but still good. Our income was boosted by the annual rent for the Watsonia car park, and expenses were decreased by JobKeeper. Employment expenses will continue to swing wildly from month to month.

ANYONE?



## mainly music: November 2020

The weekly emails have continued with Jo's fortnightly session. I've tried to include appropriate activities – one each week – as suggestions for keeping the children 'entertained'. Most of the families seem to appreciate the emails and hopefully, if the activities are not in themselves what they want, they may inspire the parents to try something else

Currently we are trying to plan a working possibility for next year. Hopefully we will be less restricted in what we can do, but the questions are really how many sessions and where. Please pray that we make the right decision because we are bound to disappoint some families whatever we decide.

Rosemary Bellair (9459 5394)

## Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting will be on Sunday 29th November. We do not know yet whether it will be possible to have a live service in the church by then, but we are planning for a mixed live and Zoom meeting. If we can have a big live service, we'll hold the APM after it, but it will also be available on Zoom for those who prefer to take part that way; while if we can't gather most of us together, we'll have the APM mostly by Zoom, but we'll have arrangements for those without the technology, to either join with someone who does, or come to a (socially-distanced) venue to take part.

You should have received a letter about the Electoral Roll. If you didn't receive a letter but think you should be on the parish roll as a member, please contact Denise as soon as possible.

You can nominate anyone you fancy, including yourself, to be a Churchwarden or on the Parish Council, and you can do this by phone or email and we'll fix up the paperwork later. To be presented to the APM requires the agreement of the person nominated plus two nominators, but we can help organise this. If you want the existing people back again they have to be nominated too.

Annual reports of groups should be in by 8th November. Email them to [banyuleparish@gmail.com](mailto:banyuleparish@gmail.com) or [banyule.parish@gmail.com](mailto:banyule.parish@gmail.com), or ring Denise to arrange delivery. I wouldn't trust Australia Post at the moment.

The APM is important, and we are hoping for some significant news about 2021, so please attend (in person or virtually). The December *Babble* will come out a week later than usual so it can report on the meeting.

## The op shop needs volunteers!

We are aiming to open the op shop by the beginning of December. But some people who have put in many devoted years of service are no longer able to keep doing it, and if we can't get enough new volunteers we won't be able to open Monday to Saturday as we used to. In fact, it looks at present like three days a week will be our limit.

No-one is called to work there alone. You will always have someone experienced with you. The work is not difficult, and it is rewarding. The op shop is an outreach, a help for people with little money, and an important source of income for the parish.

## Holy Spirit Mothers' Union

The meeting on Wednesday 28th October has been cancelled due to the coronavirus. If all plans work we should be able to meet on Wednesday November 25<sup>th</sup> at 10 am in Holy Spirit Church.

I have posted more beanies and fingerless gloves to the Seafarers. Thank you to the knitters and all who donated wool. I have ordered our 2021 Diaries and MU Christmas Cards, also to be sent by post.

*Christmas cards for the remand centres:*

I phoned St Eanswythe's MU at Altona to see if they had enough Christmas cards. They have, owing to people after Christmas leaving Christmas cards on the Church doorstep, etc; so they have 2700 Christmas cards, enough for this year.

*Midday Prayers:*

North/West Region: St Mary's Sunbury. The repairing and painting of the inside of the church is almost complete, only waiting for the artist to paint lettering over the inside arch. Link Branches: St Mary's Broughty Ferry Scotland and St Peter's Kitwe. Families World Wide: Kitgum in Uganda, Tasmania, Central Melanesia in the Solomon Islands. Defence Anglican Chaplaincy: part-time Chaplains of the RAN – Robert Graue, Stephen Briggs. Pray that the members will have vision and purpose to use our gifts and resources in the best possible way. Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn, Bishop Mark Short.

Elsie Storr



## Blokies Helping Blokies on Zoom

We returned in October to meeting on the traditional first Saturday of the month. Twelve Blokies attended.



Not Frank Webb

We noted again the increased pilosity of several members. Frank told us that he had once had a beard as well as the Ned Flanders moustache, but it had been a casualty of his film career. He had been invited to take part in a film, evidently written for him, called (I believe) *Charlotte's Webb*. He had agreed to take the rôle, the contract had been signed by his agent, his name had been put on a star on a caravan, and then they told him his beard wouldn't fit with the dashing character the director envisaged for him.

They painted every tree leaf in Heidelberg Park orange to set off Frank's complexion, but in the end almost all his footage ended up on the cutting-room floor (the editing staff must have been slobs, not putting it in an appropriate receptacle). Frank has not had the heart to see the film as it was released, and Glenn suggested that instead of 'Where's Wally?', the Blokies could play a similar, but much harder, game with the film—'Where's Webby?'.

Len told us that his treatment was almost over, with only two days to go. Jon's wife continues to improve, even though they were told there was only a 10–20% chance.

Frank swears that he has stopped feeding the cockatoos, but Glenn told us he (Glenn) has taken on a pigeon who talks to him (in pidgin), mainly complaining about the poor food, and threatening a coup.

Glenn discovered that Daniel Andrews would let him set up a drinking party on his nature strip, provided Stuart was not allowed to attend. He is also planning another liquor run into David's cell, hoping this time to get a keg past the screws.

Glenn told us he discovered \$70 in notes stuck on the wet inside bottom of his recycle bin after it had been emptied. He first looked carefully for hidden cameras that might catch him trying to remove painted-on banknotes, but no cameras could be found and the currency appeared to be real. His explanation is that his business is going so well that people slip in untraceable legal tender with the paperwork, and God made sure he didn't lose it with the papers by sticking it to the bottom. Of course the Blokies didn't believe this for a minute.

Allan told us how much he is enjoying the lockdown because he can stay home and turn wood. He has also spoken to his older brother, with whom he normally has hardly any contact.

We were informed that David Clifton has an enormous record collection, and is happy to have it added to. This led Allan to mention that he had discovered that his parents' favourite 78, from 1910 or

thereabouts, had very naughty lyrics, which they claimed not to have known about.

The Blokies also discussed the upcoming Council elections, and noted the large field in Hawdon Ward because there was no incumbent.

*Glenn says: Banyule Council through Nicole Leung has been very supportive to relocate us to our new home in Macleod as the Ivanhoe Senior citizen property has been sold to a property developer. It is possible, but far from certain, that the November meeting might be in person at Macleod. Even if we do meet in person, we shall see if we can also support by Zoom those for whom attendance would be problematic. Glenn will email those on the list, or call him at 0487 852 808.*

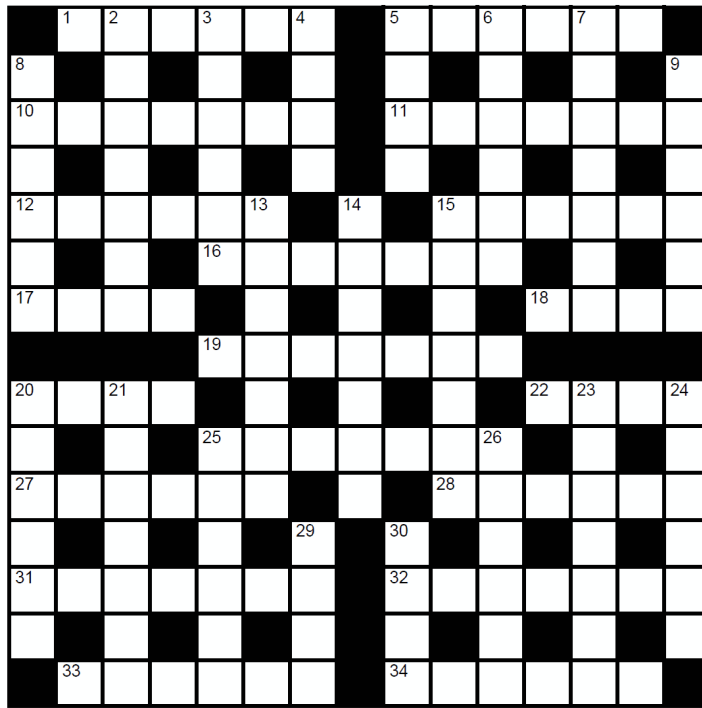
Peter McKay



Glenn has a go at some rank growth at St John's

Across

- 1 A nation referred to in the O.T. and the N.T. (6)
- 5 Teacher; leader (6)
- 10 Letter (7)
- 11 Blood was painted on these (7)
- 12 "Out of the \_\_\_\_\_ came something sweet" (6)
- 15 Where was Jacob? (6)
- 16 Made unholy (7)
- 17 Ezekiel lay on this for three years (4)
- 18 Very old (4)
- 19 Sure (7)
- 20 Ethiopia (4)
- 22 Remaining (4)
- 25 Naaman's maid, for example (7)
- 27 Seraiah's father (6)
- 28 Land (6)
- 31 Hold inside (7)
- 32 The teaching place of the Ethiopian eunuch (7)
- 33 Jews are renowned for celebrating these (6)
- 34 A child of Caleb & Maachah (6)



by Philologus

© BiblePuzzles.org.uk

- 4 Untruths (4)
- 5 The Promised Land was said to be flowing with this (4)
- 6 We have all done this (6)
- 7 Late in the day (7)
- 8 Animals (6)
- 9 A Philistine city (6)
- 13 Sisera, for example (7)
- 14 A nation in the O.T. neighbouring Israel (7)
- 15 Anyone who comes to God must do this (7)
- 20 Together with 'time' this happens to all (6)
- 21 Did Nadab and Abihu have a match for this? (7)
- 23 Self scrutiny before communion (7)
- 24 Half the time of Jesus' fasting (6)
- 25 Lebanese trees (6)
- 26 Provided by God when we are tempted (6)
- 29 Far extremes of the earth (4)
- 30 Luke Part II ? (4)

Down

- 2 The lame man was too slow to reach this type of water (7)
- 3 To wait on, or be present (6)

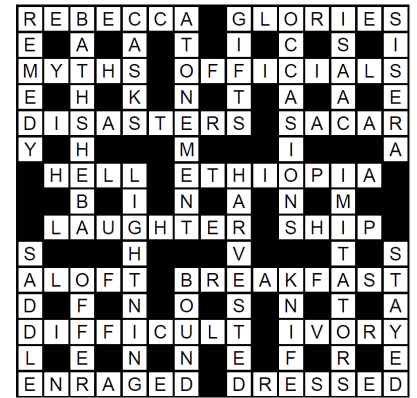
**Bible Word Search – Divine Protection (Psalm 91)**

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**.

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

[https://www.christianbiblereference.org/ws\\_DivineProtectionPsalm91\\_0.htm](https://www.christianbiblereference.org/ws_DivineProtectionPsalm91_0.htm)  
**Afraid, Almighty, Bear, Befall, Charge over thee, Come nigh thee, Darkness, Dash your foot, Destruction, Dwelleth, Hedge, Honour, I deliver him, Long life, Love, Mercies, Pestilence, Raging epidemic, Salvation, Secret place, Shew, Shield buckler, Snare of fowler, Ten thousand, Thy habitation, Tread on lion, Truth**

**Answers to last month's puzzles:**



Bible Word Search mystery answer:  
**ETERNAL LIFE**

Last month's anagram:

abenqtu \_\_\_\_\_ banquet \_\_\_\_\_

efloorsvw \_\_\_\_\_ overflows \_\_\_\_\_

ainnot \_\_\_\_\_ anoint \_\_\_\_\_

degnooss \_\_\_\_\_ goodness \_\_\_\_\_

deehhprs \_\_\_\_\_ shepherd \_\_\_\_\_

ehosu \_\_\_\_\_ house \_\_\_\_\_

almps \_\_\_\_\_ psalm \_\_\_\_\_

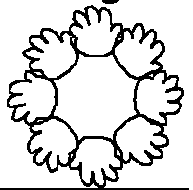
degju \_\_\_\_\_ guide \_\_\_\_\_

eeforrw \_\_\_\_\_ forever \_\_\_\_\_

ceoprtt \_\_\_\_\_ protect \_\_\_\_\_

**Sermon on the Mount Anagram**

[www.dltk-bible.com](http://www.dltk-bible.com)



ehiinrt \_\_\_\_\_

aaceekmprs \_\_\_\_\_

cdefmoart \_\_\_\_\_

aceehrt \_\_\_\_\_

ceeijor \_\_\_\_\_

eeghinorsstu \_\_\_\_\_

abdeeisttu \_\_\_\_\_

ceedprstu \_\_\_\_\_

ehopprrt \_\_\_\_\_

cefilmru \_\_\_\_\_

## 'Scattered and Exiled' 1

The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

27 September 2020

Genesis 3:1–13, Romans 8:18–23

by Patrick Senn

### Introduction

Natalie Gatz is an Australian woman who lives in the US. In March, at the start of the pandemic, she was 27 weeks pregnant with two twins. Our PM urged Australians across the globe to come home, but she was told her twins could be born any minute, and it was too dangerous to travel. Today, her twins have been born but she still is stuck overseas. Natalie is just one of tens of thousands of Aussies who are stuck across the globe. Every other day they appear in our news segments. A cap on international arrivals, limited number of expensive plane tickets, and the costs of mandatory hotel quarantine keep them away. The plague has exiled them from their home; they are trapped, cut off, and imprisoned by powers that are greater than us. Natalie said, *"This doesn't feel like there's any end in site [sic]. There's no light at the end of the tunnel. I don't know when we'll be able to come home"* You can hear the desperation in her words.

According to the Christian picture of the world, the events of this year so far are no surprise, but a glimpse behind the scenes. The Scriptures tell us that the whole world is cursed under the power of sin and evil, that we are exiled from our true home and friendship with God, held captive by powers and forces that are greater than us. In other words, the world including humanity is fallen.

### The Goodness of Creation

This story begins with the first book of the Bible. Genesis is not scientific history but primarily theology: telling us about God, and the world's relation to him. Of course, there are historic elements to it but also a lot of myth: *myth* not meaning 'untrue' but describing fundamental truths in deeply poetic ways. When we read the creation story it says as much about us today as it does about our first human ancestors.

When we read Genesis 1–3, we see that God made a world that is orderly, harmonious, and 'very good'. He creates humanity in his image, to represent him and rule the world on his behalf. The dominant image in the early stages is peace in the sense of flourishing. Peace is the defining feature in humanity's relationship to God, to one another, and to the world. In order for there to be peace there have to be limits. God puts boundaries upon humans. While we are gifted the whole world, he tells our human parents to stay away from the tree with a warning: *"You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."*

The tempter appears and questions God's goodness. He twists God's boundaries, so that rather being for our good and our flourishing, he really is holding us back and standing in the way. We know how the story goes. Adam and Eve eat the fruit, and the result: shame, disharmony, guilt and fear; in other words, sin is introduced. God appears, and his presence is no longer life but a threat; he is no longer friend but foe. The act of breaking God's law leaves us with not much else but to fear it and despise it.

### Ruined Royalty

Already now we can see the deep truths within the story. It is so easy to forget the aims and good of the law, and only see its prohibitions. There is a reason why there are laws that limit how fast we can drive. But, there is something in our nature that moves us to dismiss good provisions and try to assert ourselves above them. We despise law. Last week, I mentioned the anti-lockdown protests as a very vivid and current example of this. But our hate for law does not even have to be this dramatic. Just remember the last time someone criticised your parenting, or the last time you failed in a task at your work. At weddings, we commit to be lawfully wedded to one another, but half of all marriages end. It is one of the worst feelings to know you have not measured up. And we all, like Eve, have seen something, desired it, and acted upon it despite knowing it is wrong.

In your time, please read the whole of Genesis chapter 3. There we see that as a punishment, God announces a curse upon creation: the serpent, the woman and the man, and the earth on which we live. While the creation is still good, it now also is plagued with sin. And this is one of the most honest and accurate ways of understanding the world and humanity. The world is such a beautiful place, full of wonder, mystery, and awe. At the same time, a place of evil, suffering, and death. Blessings and curses exist alongside each other. Humans are made in God's image, precious and valuable, capable of greatness and profound misery. It is human nature that has built cathedrals and concentration camps. The philosopher Blaise Pascal described us as *ruined royalty*, "The glory and refuse of the universe".

As a result of our human parents' sin, and as a result of our own bad choices today, there is relational conflict and hostility, dangers and threats in the earth, and ultimately death. If you read the rest of chapter 3, Adam and Eve are exiled from the garden, all of humanity lives now scattered from home and friendship with God.

### Creation waits

This view of the world was carried on in the preaching of the apostles. St Paul agrees that all is not well with the world. In our second reading he tells us that there are 'sufferings of this present time', that 'the creation was subjected to futility', that it is in bondage to decay, and that it is 'groaning in labour pains'. This year, many have realised that all is not well with the world. But the world was fallen before 2020, and there always has been sin and suffering in the world, ever since our first parents' disobedience. Sin is a

curse that ravages our world, and everyone experience it in different ways; whether it is in profound sickness, relational conflicts, disappointments in life, and ultimately death. While the pandemic has created many new problems, in many other ways it merely intensified and exasperated evils that were already there. The world is tragically fallen; it was created good and there is much beauty, but it is fallen. The Christian story honestly acknowledges this. But, the good news is that it only starts there.

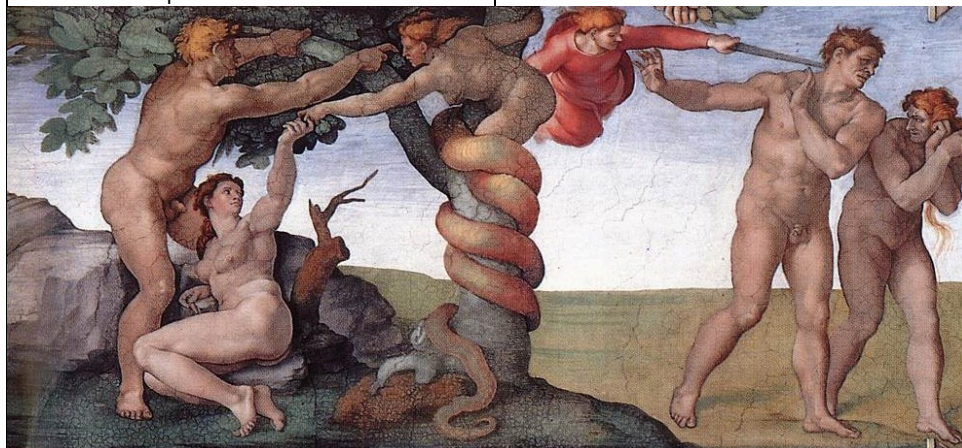
St Paul reminds us that we have hope: *"the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God."* In the resurrection of Jesus, God has started restoring the earth from the curse. Through Jesus, the curse of death is defeated, and one day he will restore all things. In the meantime, as we wait, creation groans as if with labour pains until God will restore all things. We will not save ourselves. I pray and hope a vaccine will come soon, but that will solve the coronavirus, it will not solve the curse of evil, sin and death. Different plagues might come again, laws will still be broken, and we still will face tragedies. Returning to normal will not save us. Only Jesus will.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I opened with the story of Natalie, and that tens of thousands of Aussies are stranded across the world, longing to return to their home. The Christian story of the world tells us we all also are exiled, cast away from our home, subject to powers greater than ourselves. While this always was the case, perhaps this pandemic really highlighted to you that all is not well with the world. While the world is good, and beautiful, and true, it also is fallen and cursed. Nowhere is this clearer than in the human being. We are ruined royalty, the glory and refuse of the universe.

But, God has promised, and in fact has already begun, to restore this world and to lift its curse. In the resurrection of Jesus, he has started to peel back the decay, and to restore it to its blessing. In the meantime, we wait with frustration, with groaning, with anticipation.

*"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God."* AMEN.



Michelangelo, from the Sistine Chapel

## ‘Scattered and Exiled’ 2

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

4 October 2020

Deuteronomy 28:58–68, Galatians 3:10–14

by Patrick Senn

### Introduction

We are scattered and exiled. Last week, I shared that just as tens of thousands of Aussies are scattered across the world, subject to powers that trap and keep them away from their home, so also humanity is exiled from their true home of friendship with God, trapped under the power and curse of sin. These forces of chaos are external and oppress us, like the pandemic and death, but also internal as humans contribute to the evils of the world. The world and humanity are under the curse of sin. This is the bad and bleak but honest news. Thankfully, the story does not finish but only starts here. The Christian message is ultimately about the good news! And the good news today is that although the world is cursed under sin, the ultimate curse of sin has been absorbed and defeated by our Lord Jesus. Although these powers still rage and storm in the world, and we so often contribute to them, they no longer can keep us from the blessings of God. Through Jesus, God has entered into a new and eternal covenant with us that will not fade.

### Covenants and Contexts

Now, ‘a covenant’ may seem like a foreign idea to you. But, even in our age of highly advanced legal systems, refined and sharpened for centuries, we still have covenants today. Last week, the premier made his highly anticipated appearance at the Hotel Quarantine Inquiry. At the start, he did not sign a legal form, but picked up a Bible and said: ‘I swear by Almighty God that I will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.’ A covenant is basically an oath before God, a binding relation between a lesser and a superior. The Premier effectively put himself under the mercy of God should he not tell the truth.

In the ancient world, long before Roman law, covenants and ceremonies were much more common and a lot more dramatic. Ceremonies happened between kingdoms when, for example, one nation conquered another. It involved a ritual where the expectations and rewards were outlined along with the consequences and punishments. Blessings and curses were announced, an animal slaughtered, and the ceremony was then ratified with a meal.

This is what is happening in Deuteronomy 28–29, but before we look at the details we have to ask what led up to this? Although our first human parents sinned and brought the curse of sin into the world, God did not give up on his creation. He chose one man—Abraham—and promised that through his descendants the curse of sin would be removed and the whole creation return to blessing once again. Abraham’s descendants settled in Egypt and eventually become the great nation of Israel. They eventually became enslaved under Pharaoh, but through God’s mighty acts they were rescued and set free. Israel wanders the desert for forty years until an entirely new generation stands at the edge of the Promised Land, where they finally will settle and undo the curse of sin by blessing the whole world. To bless the whole world, God invites them into a covenant, a special relationship. This is where we come to our first reading.

### The Curses

At the start of chapter 28, God lists to the nation of Israel all the blessings that will come should they remain faithful to him. And then, all the curses. In your own time when you look at the whole chapter it is very clear that the curses outweigh the blessings. Why? We all know that prosperity makes us apathetic and forgetful of God. When life is comfortable it is easy to forget about God and think we do not really need him. God warns Israel against this and that is why the consequences dominate this chapter. The curses are not vindictive threats but merciful warnings. Our government airs some pretty intense ads. Whether it is an ad about drink-driving where a horrible accident happens, or an ad warning about the terrible disease of COVID-19, they are intense ads but they warn us for our good. God is warning his people ‘Don’t let this happen to you.’

Among the many consequences there will be ‘fearful plagues’, ‘harsh and prolonged disasters’, and ‘lingering illnesses’. God even warns them that there will be exile: ‘*the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other.*’

### Like today?

Reading Deuteronomy 28 today is quite striking, and some of these things sound very much like this year. So many are scattered across the world, exiled from their home. We are banished from gathering in church. The coronavirus is very much a ‘lingering illness’, and living in lockdown has been a constant suspense. “*In the morning [we] say, “If only it were evening!” and in the evening, “If only it were morning!”*”

But we have to be careful with how we read and interpret Scripture. We cannot read this chapter and just apply it today. We have to be mindful of the original setting: the nation of Israel, waiting at the edge of the Promised Land, hearing the conditions of the covenant. The curses are directed against them depending on their faithfulness to God, not to us today.

Sadly, we know that Israel failed. Although they agreed to the covenant in chapter 29 and promised to remain faithful to God, they soon forgot him and went their own way. God chose them to undo the curse of sin and to bring his blessing to the whole world.

Instead, they contributed to the world’s problems and persisted in its curse. They broke the covenant, and its threats and punishments came down on them as they ultimately were exiled from the Promised Land and scattered across the world. How can this be? How can the curse of the world be lifted, if the people God chose stuffed up? How can we ever return to the peace of the garden if we keep following our first human parents? Well, thanks be to God for Jesus!

### Curse absorbed (Galatians)

God, in his mercy, has stepped in. While Israel was unable to bring God’s blessing to a world cursed under sin, Christ frees us from the curse by absorbing it in our place. At St Paul declares, “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.’*” The problem of sin, introduced by our first human parents, the powers that afflict our world and the human heart, are ultimately dealt with upon the cross. Israel failed, but God has not given up.

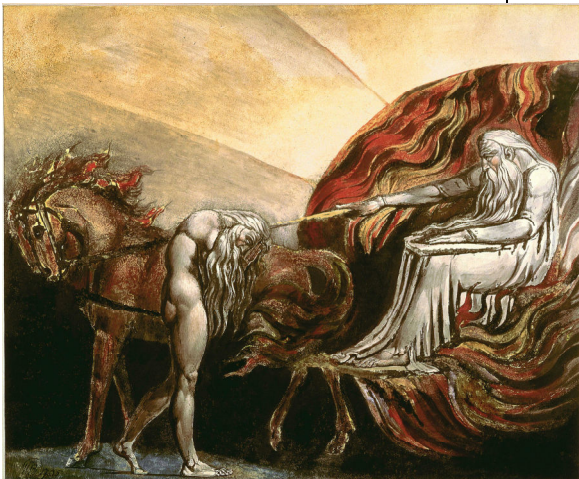
And this is such good news because Christians also have failed. It is all too clear that throughout history the church has done wrong in many ways. And, even though the church, like Israel, is called to be a blessing to the world, she all too often ends up contributing to its curse. And not only the church, but we all as individuals have broken God’s commandments, have brought disharmony and chaos into the world, rather than flourishing and peace.

Yet, in Jesus God makes a new covenant with us where we receive his blessing not by our performance, but by faith; by a grateful and lively trust in him. Through Jesus, we are no longer under the curse of sin and the law because we are no longer judged by it. The curse of sin, all that afflicts and plagues our world, the curse of the law, the consequences of despising God, all these things Jesus took on himself upon the cross, and it died.

We might ask, why then does the curse of sin still ravage our world, and why do great evils happen? We cannot know for sure, but what we do know is that for us these things are not punishments, they cannot keep us from the favour of God. The curse of sin was dealt with by Jesus, and through him we are united with God and enjoy his blessings. Whether evil is inflicted upon us, or whether we inflict evil onto others, Jesus absorbs the curse that is rightly due to us. Death, sin, suffering, in whatever forms they take cannot separate us from God.

### Conclusion

The world and humanity is scattered and exiled. The chaos our first human parents introduced, God called Israel to undo by setting them apart in a special covenant in order that they may bless the world. But Israel failed. Rather than being a blessing to the world they contributed to its curse. And this is the story of all of us. We all have gone astray and broken God’s law. But the curse of sin, and the punishment of sin no longer falls upon us. “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us*”. We are in a new covenant. We enjoy friendship with God and receive his blessing not by earning it with our performance, but by trusting and believing in his provision in Christ. By faith, we are made righteous, friends with God, and neither death nor pandemic can take that away from us. AMEN.



William Blake, *God Judging Adam* (1795)

## 'Scattered and Exiled' 3

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

11 October 2020

Psalm 79

by Patrick Senn

### Introduction

Last year in April I remember being shocked after waking up from a nap. I was scrolling through Twitter, and I saw a picture of Notre Dame in Paris, but it was up in flames. I could not believe the picture I was looking at, and as time went by more and more pictures and reports started appearing. Soon enough the whole world was in shock. For so many Notre Dame is more than just a building. For many across the world, Notre Dame is tied to happy memories of a holiday in Paris. For the French, it is an icon of national pride and identity. And for Christians, it is of course a building dedicated to the Virgin Mary and for the worship of God, where prayers and hymns have risen for almost a thousand years. It was not *just* a building on fire, it was a disorienting and confusing tragedy. Events like the fire of Notre Dame happen in a world where not everything is well, in a world where we are scattered and exiled.

Long before Notre Dame stood or any cathedrals were built there was the fall of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was no ordinary city but *The Holy City*, the city where God himself had chosen to dwell among his people, to bless them in order that they may bless the world and undo the curse of sin. But, as we heard last week, Israel was unfaithful to God, broke the covenant, and was exiled from their holy city and land and scattered into the foreign nations of the world.

Psalm 79 is a psalm of lament, a direct response to the disaster of the fall of Jerusalem. As we all are scattered and exiled, and each of us face our own horrors in life, it is incredibly important that *we learn* how to lament. In our culture, we are used to living in victory and power, not under defeat and weakness. This year has been devastating for so many people in many different ways; and yet, the usual public response to this has been saying things like "Be strong!", "Hang in there!", and "This will pass." You do not hear anyone teach how to lament, that you actually can feel sad and devastated, and bring these things before God. The psalms of lament teach us how to live in defeat and weakness.

### Tragedy and Defeat (Psalm 79:1-4)

The psalmist begins his lament by telling God the horrors that he has witnessed. "*O God, the nations have invaded your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple, they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble.*" Armies have invaded the holy city, and God's temple has been destroyed. This year, no doubt one of the

most upsetting things has been the restrictions around funerals. The numbers have to be very small, people are not allowed to physically embrace each other, and families separated by state and national borders cannot even be present in person. After Jerusalem's fall, the psalmist laments that the people have been murdered and simply left in the open to be eaten by the beasts. "*They have poured out blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there is no one to bury the dead.*" Rather than gain sympathy and compassion, God's people are mocked and derided by their enemies. "*We are objects of contempt to our neighbours, of scorn and derision to those around us.*"

### How Long, O Lord (Psalm 79:5-10)

In light of all this grief and trauma, after telling God everything he has faced, the psalmist can ask only one thing of God: "*How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever?*" He knows God is just and good, but, where is he? Why does he seem absent while the wicked oppress?

"How Long, O Lord?" This prayer, this cry is one that resonates immensely with us to this day, and it brings us to the heart of what it is to lament. We know that God is faithful, good, and just, but this gets challenged in the midst of our own tragedies and sufferings. I know that for many of you, even before this year there has already been immense suffering and personal tragedies. For others, the pandemic has brought much grief upon you. As we live scattered and exiled under the curse of sin, and our troubles become too much to bear, the psalms of lament teach us how to cry out in faith.

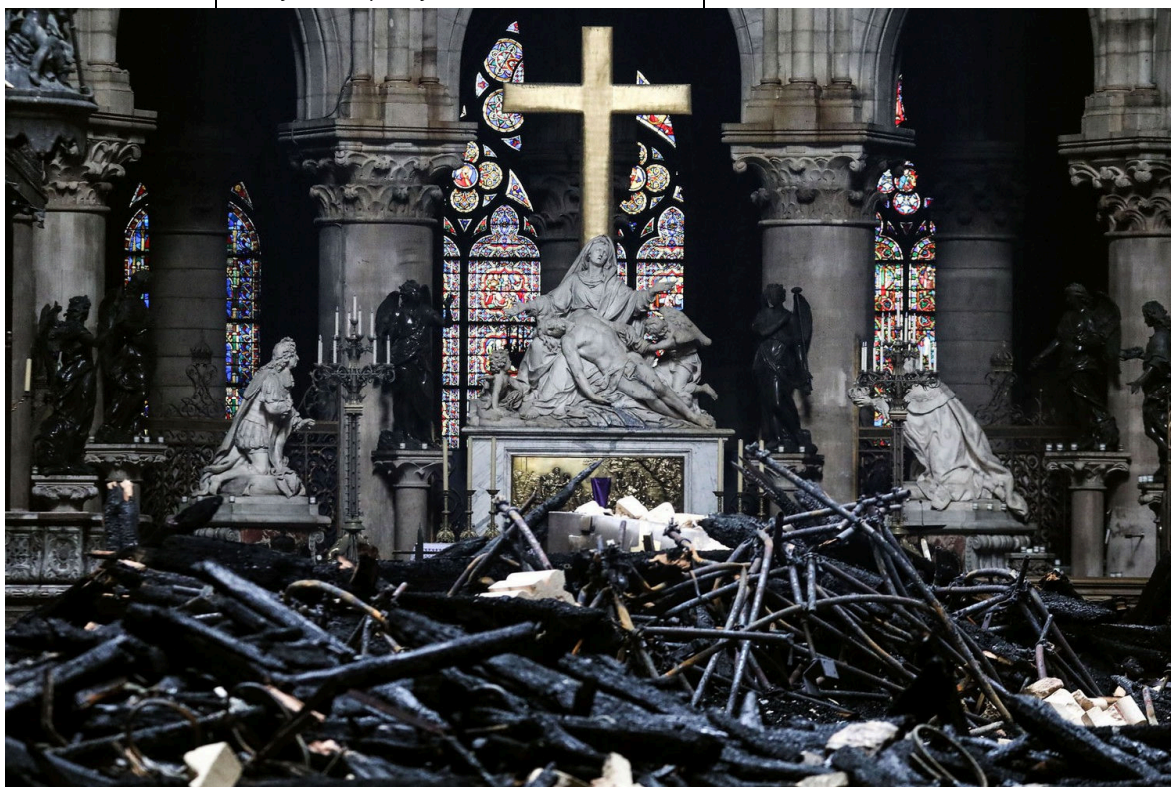
As this year has dragged on, have you told God about your pain and disappointments? Have you ever taken the time to honestly tell him you are hurt? Like I said earlier, our culture does not like to sit in the pain. We prefer quick fixes: "Stay strong!" "Be kind!" and so on. Lament invites us to cry out "*How Long, O Lord?*" and "*may your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in*

*desperate need.*" True lament happens when we are at our absolute end, when we admit that we are too weak on our own. We very rarely get to that point because our culture prizes the Aussie battler, the strong and self-sufficient individual who does not need any handouts. But, there come some tragedies in life that are too much and that shatter our strength. In those times, when we have nothing to show for ourselves, all we can do is cry out: "*may your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need.*"

### Conclusion

We need to learn how to lament because for as long as we live in this world we are scattered and exiled. By God's mercy, we can enjoy the goodness of life and receive it all as a gift. But, in a world where not all is well, where sin and death rage, there inevitably come times where we see the cathedrals of our own lives burn down and destroyed, just like Notre Dame and Jerusalem. For so many people, this is what this year has been. This is why we have to learn how to lament. Despite how much we can build up our lives and stand firm, the powers of this world can bring it down to nothing in an instant. There are some tragedies where feel-good platitudes and slogans simply have no power, and we lose all strength. Lament teaches us that we don't always have to be happy. We don't always have to have it all together. There come times where all we can cry is "*How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever? How long will your jealousy burn like fire? ... may your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need.*"

Such prayers teach us how to relate to God in exile, in tragedy, in defeat. They reveal that some things only God can fix, and that he is not afraid of our deep and honest hurts. Lament ultimately longs and hopes for healing and restoration from the good shepherd whom we know does care for us. "*Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will praise you forever; from generation to generation we will proclaim your praise.*" AMEN.



Interior of Notre Dame after the fire

# Sermon on Luke 7

St Luke's Day

18 October 2020

by Denise Nicholls

## Luke 7:36–50

<sup>36</sup> When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. <sup>37</sup> A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. <sup>38</sup> As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

<sup>39</sup> When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner." <sup>40</sup> Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. <sup>41</sup> "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" <sup>43</sup> Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

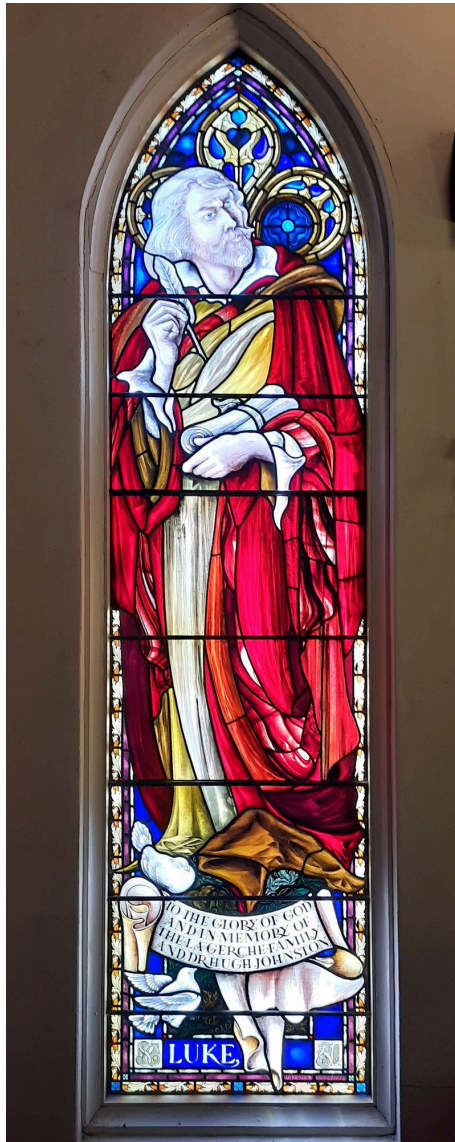
<sup>44</sup> Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

<sup>45</sup> You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. <sup>46</sup> You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. <sup>47</sup> Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

<sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." <sup>49</sup> The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" <sup>50</sup> Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Thank you, Helen—and it seems right and fitting on this day, when we celebrate St Luke, that we have two women taking our service. Patrick is here and Syd is here of course, but it's Helen and me taking the service for today. Don't forget we have a beautiful stained glass window of St Luke here at St John's in the side chapel, and it shows him with his quill writing down the Gospel and the book of Acts.

One of the things I like to do for a bit of amusement is to have a look through YouTube, and one of the things that have been taking my fancy of late has been these gender reveals—different ways that people have been announcing to their family and their world the sex of the baby that the woman is carrying; and it's been really wonderful to see the different ways that people do it, and the family's responses: the joy that they have whether it's a boy or a girl. It's quite funny when a little boy gets cranky because it's a girl because he wanted a brother, or vice versa; and usually that's accompanied by tears from the little child, but laughter and joy from the parents.



When the latest member of our church, Phoebe Senn, was born, none of us said, "Oh dear, what a shame it's not a boy". We were delighted, and Patrick and Beth were delighted, to hear that their first child was going to be a girl.

Last Sunday was the International Day of the Girl: an annual celebration that was started by the United Nations a number of years ago, to focus on girl children. For even in 2020, the difference between boys and girls, men and women, throughout the world is vast—a difference in access to education, life expectancy, wealth, seniority and status. These are very different for a girl child born in the world today to a boy child. We don't see it so much here in Australia, but in other parts of the world it is stark. I have a little poster on my fridge that says, 'Get your daughter ready for the real world: give her less pocket money than your son'. That shows the discrepancy between pay between men and women even in a country like Australia today.

In the ancient Near East when Jesus lived, men and women were treated very differently. The birth of a girl child was greeted very differently from the birth of a boy child—except for the Jews, who were always through the Old Testament taught to value all life, and all children seen as a gift from God.

Today as we celebrate St Luke's Day we focus a little bit on St Luke, whose Gospel of the Lord Jesus speaks more than any other gospel of Jesus' encounters with women; his valuing of women; how he told parables from

the sphere of women. Jesus' birth narratives occur in Luke, with the focus upon women. Of course there are some in Matthew as well; but in Luke's Gospel, Jesus' birth, death and resurrection in, women figure prominently; and the first witnesses to the resurrection, and to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus to the apostles, were women.

So as we look at this account, in what we've had read for us today, of the unnamed woman in the gospel of Luke, we see Jesus' concern for all people and Jesus' valuing of people. His love for people is on the basis of grace.

But first I just want to talk to you a little bit about women in Luke's Gospel, because his gospel is quite different from the other synoptics—from Mark and Matthew—and also from John. We know that Luke was the writer of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. We know from his introduction to the book of Acts that he was a careful researcher, that he spoke to eyewitnesses who spent time with Jesus. He himself was not one of the twelve apostles but he was a researcher, a writer; also a doctor, a physician.

We know as well that Luke accompanied Paul on a number of his missionary journeys. We see from the narrative in the book of Acts that sometimes it says 'Paul did this' or 'Paul went here', and at other times 'we travelled here'. So we know that Luke accompanied St Paul on a number of his travels, between the years of about 49 AD and about 62 AD—so what's that, 20 . . . how many years is that? 62 . . . 62 minus 49. (Helen: 13.) Thank you! I'm not very good at maths. Thank you, Helen.

Um, for about 13 years, on and off, we know that Luke had an association with St Paul: in Philippi, how they travelled to Jerusalem together, and then from Caesarea to Rome together. We also know from St Paul's own letter to Timothy: he speaks of Luke still being with him, in the midst of difficulty. As one commentator has said, "...it's fairly certain that Luke accompanied Paul on many of his missionary journeys. He accompanied Paul to Jerusalem and met the brother of Jesus, James; and so he had direct access to the eyewitnesses of Jesus. And it may well be that many of the women were still part of the church at Jerusalem while Luke was there between 57 and 59 AD". So Luke had access to people who walked, talked and saw Jesus, before and after his resurrection.

Luke among the other gospel writers tells a number of parables that are particular to his gospel, and parables that come from the sphere of women from the household: the parable of the leaven in the lump of dough; the parable of the woman and the lost coin, who searches and sweeps her house diligently; the parable of the widow and the unjust judge; and also the parable of the widow's mite, although that parable also occurs in Mark's gospel as well. Luke tells us that Jesus was not afraid to be involved in the private sphere, the private lives of women: the raising of Jairus' daughter—alone with Jairus, with a young girl at 12 years old, of marriageable age—he was okay to touch her, quite unlike other people at that time; the woman he encountered with the menstrual bleeding—Jesus was not afraid to be associated with her, or to commend her for her faith.

We know that Jesus had women friends and followers: Mary and Martha, the sisters

of his friend Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead. We know that Mary and Martha didn't only provide hospitality, but that Mary chose what was best and chose to learn at the feet of her Lord Jesus.

In Luke's Gospel we see Jesus breaking that nexus of private and public, so that Jesus was happy to encounter and to speak to women, who at that time mostly operated in the home. Although at this time in the ancient Near East women who operated outside their usual sphere of family life were often considered 'odd', or 'not right', or at very least 'out of place'.

This is a bit different from our experience, isn't it? Most of us would feel no concern about going to a doctor who was a woman, or having a lawyer who's a woman, or an architect design our house, or a pilot who's a woman, or a prime minister who is a woman. I started watching the biopic on Netflix about Ruth Bader Ginsburg, that Supreme Court judge in the United States. It's a dramatised thing of her life, and in the 1960s she and the other very few female attenders at Harvard Law School were invited to a special dinner with the faculty, and the head of the faculty at the dinner stood up and asked them to explain why they were there at Harvard and taking up the place of a man who could be studying there. Even when I was studying at theological college in the 1990s there were a few voices who said, 'Well, it's fine for women to do perhaps one year study at theological college, because that way they can help their husbands; but to do three or four years at college—well, they were taking up the position that a man could have'. Not that I took much notice of such reasoning!

In Jesus' time, when we hear the word 'sinners', we know that this included people who flouted the law, who were often on the edge of society. It included tax collectors and collaborators, like Matthew and Zacchaeus—people who were marginalised, on the edge—perhaps some of the women who were 'out of place' and in the public realm, as tavern workers, or 'shameful' women, or even prostitutes. But the word 'sinners' captures a whole class of people who were not associated with by the religious people. Even the idea that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute is not born witness in the scriptures, but it's just something that people think is true—but it doesn't say that in Scripture.

What we do see in Luke's Gospel as Jesus speaks of women, values women, is that he mixed with all sorts of people: he met with them, he dined with them. For according to Jesus, all people were valued, and valuable to God, and in God's kingdom.

So let's now turn to the passage that we just read from the Gospel of Luke: the 'unnamed woman' and Jesus. This little account appears only in the Gospel of Luke.

So the scene is set. Jesus is dining with an upright religious man. We know that he's upright and

religious because we're told that he's a Pharisee: someone who respects the law, and wants to stay pure according to the law of God. Isn't it interesting: often we know about Jesus mixing with people on the margins, but here we see Jesus mixing with everybody, even a religious person—showing us that Jesus seized every opportunity to speak of the kingdom of God with all people. Like he had done with Zacchaeus, he also did with this Pharisee called Simon.

So the scene is: Simon is the host. There are other guests present. In this type of meal—it probably wasn't a private meal like we would have in our homes, but possibly a larger public gathering—but as was the custom, Jesus was reclining at table. We were always told to 'sit up nice and straight', and you don't get to put your elbows on the table unless you've been around Cape Horn—then you can put one elbow on the table, or two if you've been around twice (my parents told me that). But here we have Jesus reclining at the table, and in comes this unnamed woman who weeps and anoints Jesus.

From this episode, we see that the question is raised: 'For whom is the message of salvation?' Is it only for those good and religious people who've always followed God and done the right thing? Jesus shows here that it is for all people; and it centres on Jesus alone—Jesus and nothing else.

And so we have this scene, perhaps embarrassing, of this woman—who is referred to as a sinful woman—weeping. Not only weeping, but touching Jesus with her hair. Simon who would have been, as a Pharisee, concerned with purity and propriety—he knows that she is someone who is a sinner, someone from the margins, someone excluded from usual fellowship with good and upright people; perhaps—probably—a prostitute. And yet we see this woman pouring out her thankfulness and bringing a blessing in the way that she can to Jesus.

Jesus knows what Simon is thinking, and so he tells Simon a parable about two people who are forgiven a debt. Which one would love more—one who's been forgiven a lot, or one who's been forgiven little? And Jesus asserts that Simon is correct in his judgment, that the one who had been forgiven the greatest debt would love more.

Isn't it surprising that in this account Jesus says to Simon, "Do you see this woman?" Well, it's clear that everybody saw her—but did he really see this person, and what she had done? Simon saw something that was unpleasant, embarrassing, not right. Jesus points her out, not for rebuke, but as an example of one who responds to God's forgiveness with an outpouring of love, of tears, of kissing in joy and greeting; and in anointing him with a beautiful gift of perfume. She is someone who, overwhelmingly, publicly, and embarrassingly to others, displays her love of Jesus, and that is clear.

It's a little unclear in the account whether perhaps she had encountered Jesus before, and that she had already been forgiven by him; or whether this was her opportunity to come before him. That's not clear; but what is clear is Jesus says, "Her many sins have been forgiven, as her great love has shown". Jesus didn't see this act of abasing herself, and crying over Jesus, and anointing him and kissing him, as an embarrassment, but as an expression of great love.

And so his pronouncement of forgiveness and peace to her, and to others, would have come as a shock. One commentator has written: "*The intrusion by the woman breaks open the symbolic world of purity in the temple, and poses the question about love. Love that is born of forgiveness, rather than ritual cleanliness, is the true sign of God's presence*".

She, with her love, shows her acceptance of this gift of grace that is given to her by Christ. For it is grace. Forgiveness is a gift of God: it isn't earned. Her inclusion in the kingdom of God was because of God's grace: forgiveness pronounced by Christ, and peace that could rest upon her.

This inclusion in the kingdom of God was open to all people. People in the centre of religious life—those for whom propriety was their way of life—and those on the margins who dared enough to break in and seek Jesus. Inclusion in the kingdom of God is by grace alone, through Christ alone.

And that's the same for us, isn't it? For us, today, it's a reminder of the gift that God's forgiveness is to all people—to anyone who seeks out Jesus. It's not based upon moral purity, anything that we have done, not on our track record in life, not on who we are or what we have done. Jesus said to this unnamed, but forever remembered, woman, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace". The peace that we have before God—the forgiveness that we have—is exactly the same as what was received by that unnamed woman, who responded with joy and love to the person of Jesus in her midst. We, like her, are recipients of God's great grace, of Christ's love for us. And so we, like her, can rejoice and be thankful, knowing that our sins are forgiven, and that it is faith that has saved us; and so we rest in the peace of Christ. Amen.



## Parish Council Notes

*Zoom meeting of Monday 19th October*

### Child safety, professional standards

- Diocesan child safety consultation to be forwarded to parents of Sunday School children.

### COVID-19

- Latest diocesan advice tabled. No immediate change. Consider gathering together again when 20 people can meet outside.
- COVIDSafe plan for our parish agreed to.
- Tried to contact BSL numerous times re COVIDSafe plans to no avail.
- To compile a COVID-19 cleaning checklist.

### Finance report

- Budget forecast calculations to be checked.

### Vicar's report

- Groundhog day in vicarage...days blur into one another. A daily walk with Mabel gets me out of the four walls. Pleased we can now travel 25 km, but still cannot visit friends.
- Longing for time away in Byron Bay (9–23 Nov), but may not occur...decide by 3 Nov.
- Frustrating not even going into my office, but better since I wheeled my office chair home to sit and look out at St John's.
- Patrick and I have made contact with everyone we can on the parish list.
- The Archbishop will come to record a service for us on Wednesday 4 November at 12:30 pm—pleased he will come.
- Meeting re possible new initiative for 2021. Possible student minister in 2021 on Sundays and helping *mainly music*.

- Participated in Diocese's refresher for Child Safety officers; thankful for the work by Louisa Pfitzner and Chris Hall that we build upon.
- Continued to Zoom with Bishop Genieve re ways to advance women in Diocese – exciting Zoom meeting with ex-PM Julia Gillard.
- Bible Study and Sunday Club are now back meeting each week. Preparation and meeting over Zoom takes more time, but that is fine.
- Still waiting for update from Mark Lane (BSL).

### Curate's report

- In the last few weeks joy has increasingly become a difficult virtue to maintain, and it is easy to default into pessimism. I am especially grieved that the prospect of our Sunday worship together still is far away.
- Nevertheless, working on our current sermon series enjoyable. Grateful for positive feedback.
- Started organising a study/get together on a weeknight. Some of usual Bible study group cannot Zoom, but perhaps some new people.
- Completed COVIDSafe documents for parish Sunday worship and pastoral services with input from all our COVID-19 safety officers.
- I phoned half of the people on our parish roll. Most who are married or live with family members are positive and doing well. Some who are living alone are suffering. Most expressed thanks for the online services.
- On 1 November I will conduct our first (and probably) last wedding for the year.
- Attended Zoom seminar for child safety officers—refresher on how churches can be safe for children. Encouraging our parish's child safety standards are up to date and taken seriously.

### Wardens' report

- AGL bills rationalised into one group under standard parish name, with generic email. Will make it easier to transfer as we choose.
- Propose new meeting with the diocese on E&Y report.
- *57 Gloucester Drive* sliding door still cannot be attended to. When possible, check and inspect.
- *St John's*:
  - Some tree branches came down, tidied up.
  - Another ascent of the tower, with an engineer. The bell mounting could be left as wood and strengthened, but a new steel frame is preferable. Tower roof rafters require replacing and a new roof. Proposed to cover deteriorating sandstone cappings and interior walls with metal sheet. Perhaps put in a new roof above the old. Cost now estimated as well over \$200,000, which we don't have: will need grant funding. Waiting on a list of works with estimated costs and why needed.
  - For safety, the bell will no longer be rung.
  - Because work on the church building will involve heavy trucks, wait on this work before resurfacing the car park.
  - Car parking invoice sent, paid.
- Footscape contract signed.
- Investigating how many volunteers available when op shop restarts. As usual, BSL silent.

Diocesan reports tabled.

### Op shop

- We have had no contact with Mark Lane of BSL since 9 June 2020. Emailed BSL 24 June, 22 Sept and again today.

*Minutes by Patrick, précis by Editor*

## Prayers for these times

*Some more Irish prayers from the Corrymeela Community, from Olive Clements:*

God with us in our policies,  
 God with us in our politics:  
 there are rarely easy answers  
 to the problems that confront us.  
 We do our best and make mistakes  
 and fix the damage done.  
 We try and fail and try again  
 but remain connected with each other.  
 We pray for those who represent us,  
 as well as those who don't.  
 May we find new ways to compromise  
 without compromising what's essential,  
 so that in fighting for what we need in life  
 we include the needs of others.  
 Amen.

God of the truth beneath our truths,  
 God of the foundation beneath our facades:  
 we give thanks that there is something  
 beyond our control  
 firmly devoted to our wellbeing.  
 We give thanks there is strength  
 available to us  
 in the moments when we want to give up.  
 We give thanks that sounding clear  
 through the noise and the distraction  
 is a whisper from you  
 calling our name  
 with the promise that you'll  
 always be with us.  
 Amen.

*(The Corrymeela Community was founded in 1965 as an organisation seeking to aid individuals and communities that suffered through the violence and polarisation of the Northern Irish conflict.)*

*From our diocese:*

### PRAYER IN A TIME OF EPIDEMIC DISEASE

Lord Jesus Christ, healer and friend, come and care for all of us through the danger and uncertainty of the coronavirus epidemic.

To people who are sick, bring healing.

To people who are displaced, isolated, or cut off from family, friends or work, bring comfort and companionship.

Work with medical staff as they care for the sick, and protect them from harm.

Give skill and fruitful research to scientists as they search for treatments, prevention and a cure.

To public health authorities, give wisdom to decide the best ways to manage both this crisis and our anxieties.

When communities are fearful, give a calm spirit, and kindness to neighbours and strangers.

Through this testing time, and through all the risks we face together, teach us once again how we can love one another as you have loved us.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

*From Bishop Philip Huggins:*

### A prayer for each day at 1900 hours as we offer prayers for our nation, amidst COVID-19

Gracious God,

We give thanks anew for your providence and presence.

We prayerfully seek your grace, amidst COVID-19 here and overseas.

We pray for those in need of healing.

We pray for your peace with those who are anxious or grieving.

We pray you will continue to strengthen and sustain all those who are serving in response.

We pray for your Holy Spirit's discernment amidst the many choices and decisions facing our national, community and medical leaders.

We pray we each might see quickly what more we can do to help those who are vulnerable.

This prayer for our nation in the family of nations, with all that is on our hearts, we gather now and pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.