

**SUNDAY 28 January 2024 - St Paul's Cooma 10am**

### **Introduction**

#### **Hymn 693 - Come As You Are**

**Come as you are, that's how I want you.  
Come as you are, feel quite at home.  
Close to my heart loved and forgiven;  
come as you are, why stand alone?**

**No need to fear, love sets no limits.  
No need to fear, love never ends.  
Don't run away, shamed and disheartened.  
Rest in my love, trust me again.**

**I came to call sinners, not just the righteous.  
I came to bring peace, not to condemn.  
Each time you fail to live by my promise,  
why do you think I'd love you the less?**

**Come as you are, that's how I love you.  
Come as you are, trust me again.  
Nothing can change the love that I bear you.  
All will be well, just come as you are.**

### **Greeting**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. **And also with you.**

### **Sentence of the day**

Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." Mark 3:34-35

### **Prayer of Preparation**

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

Jesus said: 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

### **Prayer of the Day**

Almighty God, give us such a vision of your purpose, and such an assurance of your love and power that we may ever hold fast the hope which is in Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **The Ministry of the Word**

#### **Deuteronomy 30:15-20**

<sup>15</sup>See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. <sup>16</sup>For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

<sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, <sup>18</sup>I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

<sup>19</sup>This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live <sup>20</sup>and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

### Psalm 111

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD. I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

<sup>2</sup> **Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.**

<sup>3</sup> Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever.

<sup>4</sup> **He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.**

<sup>5</sup> He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

<sup>6</sup> **He has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the lands of other nations.**

<sup>7</sup> The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.

<sup>8</sup> **They are established for ever and ever, enacted in faithfulness and uprightness.**

<sup>9</sup> He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever— holy and awesome is his name.

<sup>10</sup> **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise**

### Acts 1:20-26

<sup>20</sup> “For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms: “‘May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,’ and, “‘May another take his place of leadership.’” <sup>21</sup>Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, <sup>22</sup>beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.” <sup>23</sup>So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. <sup>24</sup>Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” <sup>26</sup>Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

### Mark 3:7-35

#### Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

<sup>7</sup> Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. <sup>8</sup> When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. <sup>9</sup> Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. <sup>10</sup> For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. <sup>11</sup> Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.” <sup>12</sup> But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him. <sup>13</sup> Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup> He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and to have

authority to drive out demons. <sup>16</sup> These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), <sup>17</sup> James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder”), <sup>18</sup> Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot <sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

<sup>20</sup> Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. <sup>21</sup> When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.” <sup>22</sup> And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.” <sup>23</sup> So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. <sup>27</sup> In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house. <sup>28</sup> Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, <sup>29</sup> but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.” <sup>30</sup> He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.”

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. <sup>32</sup> A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.” <sup>33</sup> “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked. <sup>34</sup> Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup> Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

This is the gospel of the Lord: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

### **Sermon Who is on Jesus’s Side - Mark 3:7-35**

#### **The Nicene Creed**

**We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.**

**Amen.**

#### **Prayers**

Let us pray for the world and the church.

Response: Gracious God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

#### **The Lord’s Prayer**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us**

from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

### **Prayer of Approach**

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies, we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

### **The Confession**

God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy, welcoming sinners and inviting them to the Lord's table. Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

**Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Greeting of Peace**

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

### **Hymn 665 - Jesus Christ is waiting**

**Jesus Christ is waiting, waiting in the streets;**

**no-one is his neighbour, all alone he eats.**

**Listen Lord Jesus, I am lonely too.**

**Make me, friend or stranger, fit to wait on you.**

**Jesus Christ is raging, raging in the streets,**

**where injustice spirals and real hope retreats.**

**Listen Lord Jesus, I am angry too.**

**In the Kingdom's causes let me rage with you.**

**Jesus Christ is healing, healing in the streets**

**curing those who suffer, touching those he greets.**

**Listen, Lord Jesus, I have pity too.**

**Let my care be active, healing just like you.**

**Jesus Christ is dancing, dancing in the streets,**

**where each sign of hatred he, with love, defeats.**

**Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too.**

**Where good conquers evil let me dance with you.**

**Jesus Christ is calling, calling in the streets,**

**'Who will join my journey? I will guide their feet.'**

**Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few.**

**Walk one step before me; I will follow you.**

## Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

**Blessed be God forever.**

## The Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Loving God, we thank you for this world of wonder and delight. You have given it to us to care for, so that all your creatures may enjoy its bounty. Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

We thank you that when we turned away from you, you sent Jesus to live and work as one of us, and bring us back to you. He showed us how to love you and set us free to love and serve one another. Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

We thank you that on the cross Jesus took away our sin, all that keeps us from each other and from you. He frees us from hate and fear, from all that destroys love and trust. Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

And so with everyone who believes in you, with all the saints and angels, we rejoice and praise you, saying:  
**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

And now we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine; may we who receive them, as Jesus said, share his body and his blood.

On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and gave you thanks. He broke the bread and gave it to his friends, and said, 'Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper he took the cup and gave you thanks. He shared the cup with them and said, 'This is my blood poured out so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in remembrance of me.'

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

You have gathered us together to feed on Christ and to remember all he has done for us. Fill us with your Spirit that we may follow Jesus in all we do and say, working for justice and bringing your peace to this world that you have made. Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen**

We who are many are one body, **for we all share in the one bread.**

**The gifts of God for the people of God.**

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

The Lord's Supper is open to all who love the Lord.

## After Communion

Father of all we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit

lights give light to the world. **Keep us in this hope that we have grasped: so we and all your people will be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name.**

### **Hymn 690 - God of the Poor**

**Beauty for brokenness, Hope for despair  
Lord in Your suff'ring world, This is our prayer  
Bread for the children, Justice joy peace  
Sunrise to sunset, Your kingdom increase**

**Shelter for fragile lives, Cures for their ills  
Work for the craftsmen, Trade for their skills  
Land for the dispossessed, Rights for the weak  
Voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak**

**God of the poor, Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts, Let tears fall like rain  
Come change our love, From a spark to a flame**

**Refuge from cruel wars, Havens from fear  
Cities for sanctu'ry, Freedoms to share  
Peace to the killing fields, Scorched earth to green  
Christ for the bitterness, His cross for the pain**

**Rest for the ravaged earth, Oceans and streams  
Plundered and poisoned, Our future our dreams  
Lord end our madness, Carelessness greed  
Make us content with The things that we need**

**Lighten our darkness, Breathe on this flame  
Until Your justice Burns brightly again  
Until the nations Learn of Your ways  
Seek Your salvation And bring You their praise**

**God of the poor, Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts Let tears fall like rain  
Come change our love, From a spark to a flame**

### **Notices**

#### **Dismissal**

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

## Sermon - Mark 3:7-35 - Who is on Jesus's side?

### Circles of friends

How many friends would you say you have?

1-5? 5-15? 15-50? 50-150? More than 150?

According to British anthropologist Robin Dunbar, people can only manage a maximum of about 150 people in their social circle. Even then, most only have about 5 close friends, or support clique, 15 as a sympathy group, 50 what you might call good friends, and the rest are just friends or acquaintances.

Everything is different on the Internet of course. Apparently an American William Goldberg has the most Facebook friends at 4663, but the average is 338. The Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo has the most followers with more than 168 million followers. Facebook figures don't really mean anything, but even they pale into insignificance compared to Jesus, who statisticians claim has 2.38bn followers today.

### The outer circle - interested but not friends

Jesus started from a much smaller beginning, as we read in our gospel this morning. We heard that "a large crowd" followed Jesus from Galilee. We don't know how many were in that crowd, but Galilee was in fact a region with up to about 200 towns, and a population around a million, so it is possible this large crowd was at least comparable to the 5000 men, plus women and children that Jesus fed later at the feeding of the 5000.

You wouldn't say that this crowd were all followers of Jesus. The passage makes it clear that they went to the lake because Jesus had been healing people and casting out demons, and not because they were his followers, or committed to him in any real sense at that point. A percentage would have been there because they were in need of healing or exorcism, or bringing a friend or family member, but a lot would have been there simply for the entertainment value.

Also, we can't say how many of these, apart from the 12 apostles, went beyond just knowing a little about Jesus, turning up to see what the fuss was about, to move closer into Jesus' circle of friends, becoming his followers or disciples. Even those who came to Jesus for healing or to be delivered of their demons, and those who tried to touch Jesus, didn't necessarily move further into Jesus' circle of friends. Many were healed, but he then sent them away, telling them, and the demons he had cast out not to speak of him, and in most cases, never having any more contact. These were the outermost circle of friends, people who were interested in Jesus, but never taking it any further.

### Innermost circle - apostles and closest disciples

The second group of friends discussed in the passage today were the 12 apostles. Jesus called the twelve he wanted that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. They were the core of his circle of friends. Of these 12 we know that there was an inner core of three who were closest to Jesus - Simon, whom Jesus named Peter, James and John. These were the ones that were with Jesus in his most intimate moments.

Jesus appointed these 12 apostles to be the leaders of the fledgling church he was establishing. They were appointed to be sent out, which is what the word apostle means - they were the sent out ones. They were sent out to cast out demons, to proclaim the gospel and to bring birth to Jesus's church. The creed we recite most Sundays declares that we are an apostolic Church, a church that has its faith in the gospel proclaimed by the apostles and their successors. In the Anglican, catholic and orthodox traditions, their successors are the bishops in the church, like Mark Short, our bishop of Canberra Goulburn diocese.

### **Mid circle - Jesus's brothers, sisters and mothers**

The third circle of Jesus' friends actually fits in between the circle of onlookers and the circle of apostles. Jesus refers to this circle as his brothers and sisters and mother. Back in verse 21, his genetic family accused him of being out of his mind because the crowds prevented him from even eating, and Jesus said that his real brothers and mother, those who were part of this circle, were the ones who did God's will. We have good reason to believe that some of his brothers, which Mark tells us were James, Joseph, Judas and Simon, were prominent in the early church, so at least some of his human family came to be part of this circle of followers.

This circle is what we would consider everyday Christians today, and includes most people in this church today. The interesting question is how Jesus defines this circle. Jesus defines it as those who do God's will. When we look at Matthew 21:28, the man who does the will of the Father repents and believes and enters the kingdom of heaven ahead of the chief priests and Jewish elders, unlike the son who originally said he would do what the Father asks, but ends up not doing it. Even more clearly, the will of God according to Matthew 18:8, is that none should perish, so this circle of friends are those who are saved to eternal life.

### **Which circle are you in?**

So today I want to all of you to be sure where you are in these circles of Jesus friends: Are you completely outside his circles of friends, not believing, and not interested in who Jesus is? On the basis that you have at least turned up this morning, I doubt there are any here this morning in this category.

Perhaps, however, you are in the outer ring of Jesus's friends, aware of him and interested, but still on the outer. You are not really a friend, and not yet doing God's will. You haven't repented, and you have no real basis to believe Jesus has saved you to eternal life. Perhaps you have never really thought about it - you come to church because you always have in or your family do, but it might as well just be for the entertainment or the social value. If this is you, we need to talk. Chat with me after the service, or find another Christian friend to introduce you to the risen Jesus Christ and help you into the most important friendship you can ever have.

As we saw with Levi last week, you don't gain that friendship by being sinless. Levi was definitely a sinner, yet Jesus came to save him. Also, in verse 28 of our reading, Jesus says "Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter. No matter what you have done, you can be forgiven and make friends with Jesus.



### **What if I've fallen out of the circles?**

Or perhaps you are already one of those who believes in Jesus and are saved to eternal life? Or at least you thought you were when you committed your life to Jesus a long time ago. Nevertheless, you are worried that you might have done something to lose your place? After all, does Jesus also say in verse 29 "but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin." Maybe you're worried you have committed the unforgivable sin, blasphemed the holy spirit, and have lost your salvation?

But what is blasphemy against the holy spirit?

Commentator Henry Alford, said the unforgivable sin of blaspheming against the Spirit is not a particular species of sin, but a definite act showing a state of sin, a willful, determined, opposition to the present power of the Holy Spirit; and this is shown by its fruit, blasphemy. It is not one thing, It's ongoing, determined, and wilful. It is not the sort of thing you do by accident.

Now, by opposing the power of the Holy Spirit, I mean consistently denying that our good God works for our good through his Holy Spirit. Instead, you ascribe God's good works to Satan, an evil power. This can only be you if you consistently oppose God and his Spirit, treat his good works as evil, and you are not repenting and claiming the forgiveness you require for the salvation that only comes from God through Jesus' death in your place, guaranteed by his resurrection. This state of continuing opposition to God is in fact the only thing that can preclude you from salvation, from eternal life, and membership of Jesus' circle of friends. If you are worried that you might be committing this unforgivable sin, then it almost certainly doesn't apply to you, because if you were, you wouldn't be worried about losing God's good gift of salvation.

So, again, today I ask you the most important question you can ever be asked. Are you sure you are in this circle of Jesus friends; are you one of those who believe in Jesus and are saved to eternal life?

Let me pray.