

**SUNDAY 7 April 2024 - St Paul's Cooma 10am, St John's Adaminaby 4pm**

### **Introduction**

**Hymn 442 - All praise to our redeeming Lord**

**All praise to our redeeming Lord, Who joins us by his grace,  
And bids us, each to each restored, Together seek his face.**

**He bids us build each other up; And, gathered into one,  
To our high calling's glorious hope We hand in hand go on.**

**The gift which he on one bestows, We all delight to prove;  
The grace through every vessel flows, In purest streams of love.**

**Even now we think and speak the same, And cordially agree;  
Con-centred all, through Jesus' name, In perfect harmony.**

**We all partake the joy of one, The common peace we feel,  
A peace to sensual minds unknown, A joy unspeakable.**

**And if our fellowship below In Jesus be so sweet,  
What heights of rapture shall we know, When round his throne we meet!**

### **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**

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.  
Mark 10:45

### **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.<sup>1</sup>

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**

O God, your Son has taught us that we must receive your Sovereign rule like a little child, help us to turn to you in faith and simplicity of heart, so that we may recognise your blessing and enter the kingdom your Son has promised: through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

**Amen.**

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

#### **Exodus 7:1-7**

<sup>1</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. <sup>2</sup> You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country. <sup>3</sup> But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and

wonders in Egypt, <sup>4</sup> he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. <sup>5</sup> And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.” <sup>6</sup> Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded them. <sup>7</sup> Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

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

### **Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29**

<sup>1</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

<sup>2</sup> **Let Israel say: “His love endures forever.”**

<sup>18</sup> The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

<sup>19</sup> **Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.**

<sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter.

<sup>21</sup> **I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.**

<sup>22</sup> The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;

<sup>23</sup> **the LORD has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes.**

<sup>24</sup> The LORD has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.

<sup>25</sup> **LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success!**

<sup>26</sup> Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.

<sup>27</sup> **The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.**

<sup>28</sup> You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you.

<sup>29</sup> **Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.**

### **1 Timothy 6:6-12**

<sup>6</sup> But godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. <sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. <sup>9</sup> Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. <sup>11</sup> But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. <sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

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

### **Mark 10:17-31**

#### **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

<sup>17</sup> As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>18</sup> “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’” <sup>20</sup> “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” <sup>21</sup> Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” <sup>22</sup> At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. <sup>23</sup> Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” <sup>24</sup> The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” <sup>26</sup> The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” <sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” <sup>28</sup> Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!” <sup>29</sup> “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or

fields for me and the gospel <sup>30</sup> will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

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

### **Sermon - Do not harden your hearts - Mark 10**

#### **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 worshipped 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 240 - All go to God**

**All go to God when they are sorely placed: they plead to him for help, for peace, for bread, for mercy, for them sinning, sick, or dead. We all do so in faith or unbelief.**

**We go to God when he is sorely placed, Find him poor, scorned, unsheltered, without bread, Whelmed under weight of evil, weak, or dead; We stand by God then, in his hour of grief.**

**God comes to us when we are sorely placed, body and spirit feeds us with his bread. For everyone, he as a man hangs dead, forgiven life he gives all through his death.**

### **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 187 - Let All Creation Dance**

**He is risen, he is risen! Tell it with a joyful voice:  
he has burst his three days' prison, let the whole wide world rejoice.  
Death is conquered, we are free, Christ has won the victory.**

**Come with high and holy gladness, sing our Lord's triumphant song:  
not one touch of twilight sadness dims his resurrection morn;  
brightly dawns the radiant east, brighter far our Easter feast.**

**He is risen, he is risen! He has opened heaven's gate:  
we are free from sin's dark prison, risen to a holier state;  
soon a brighter Easter beam on our longing eyes shall stream.**

### **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 10 - Do not harden your hearts

This morning I'm preaching on Mark chapter 10. We only read verses 17 to 31, but I'll preach on the whole chapter. Please read the whole chapter in your bibles during the week to see what you missed, but also to make sure that I am preaching from what the Bible says and not making things up. In fact, you should be doing that with every sermon I, or any other preacher preaches. If you don't think what I am saying comes from the Bible, please talk to me about it. I may have made a mistake, like misreading the passage, or at least I can explain why I think the Bible is saying what I said. Will you do that for me?

When you do read Mark 10, you will notice that I don't spend much time this morning on the first 12 verses which are about divorce. This isn't because it isn't an important part of the Bible (every weird in the Bible is important), but because it is a sensitive subject for a lot of people, and because the Bible has more to say about divorce than it says in this chapter, so I wouldn't be able to do it justice today. If the question of divorce is important to you, please come and talk to me privately, and we can look at what the Bible says about it together.

With those introductory comments, let's get on with the sermon.

Mark chapter 10 seems to be a disparate group of episodes. It starts with divorce, moves to little children and then the difficulties of rich people entering the kingdom of God, Jesus predicting his death and resurrection, the first being last, and finishing with blind Bartimaeus being healed. Disparate as these may seem, we know that God inspired Mark to put these sections together for a reason, and so it is worthwhile to look for a common theme.

Let's take a quick look at each of the sections and see if we can see that theme.

**Divorce** Firstly, Divorce: Jesus said that Moses allowed divorce because their hearts were hard. As I said, there is a lot more that can be said on this subject, but not this morning.

**Little Children** Next Jesus tells his disciples not to hinder little children from coming to him. In effect, Jesus is telling his disciples not to have hearts hardened against children. That is, they need to have compassion on them. This might be something that is difficult to do in the morning when neither you nor they have had any sleep, but I don't think it is a concept we find hard to grasp. On the other hand, his instruction that everyone needs to receive kingdom 'like children' needs a little more teasing out.

We need to understand what it is about children that we need to be like in order to enter the kingdom of God. I'm pretty sure it is not the ability to scream your lungs out until 3am and keep everyone awake, and nor is it being irresistibly cute. I'd never get to heaven if that was the criteria.

I think the most important aspect of children is their complete dependance. Babies and little children can't do anything for themselves, and I need someone to feed, wash and clothe them. They have to accept help from whoever provides it, and while they might be reluctant to try new foods, there is no point in them being hard-hearted with whoever helps them, even if the mess they leave might suggest otherwise. Similarly, we can not get into the kingdom of God in our own strength. We need God's help, and we can't be so hard-hearted that we reject God and his free entry into His kingdom.

**Rich People** Jesus then talks about how difficult it is for the rich to enter the kingdom.

A man comes to Jesus, asking what he must do to be saved. He says he has kept all the commandments, and Jesus tells him the only extra thing he has to do is sell all his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor. Mark tells us *He went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

The difficulty for the rich is that they are the polar opposite of totally dependent children. Many rich people feel they have built up their wealth through their own efforts, their hard work and determination (and poor people around them haven't), so that they deserve to be rich, and other people don't. They are so often focused on themselves and their wealth, and while it is not always the way, many are hard hearted, unable to rely on anyone's help, even God's, to get into his kingdom.

The next little episode is Jesus predicting his death and resurrection again. This is the third time he has done this in Mark's gospel, but I want to skip this section just for the moment, and come back to it shortly.

**The Last shall be First** This brings us to perhaps one of Jesus's most famous sayings, that the First will be last, and the last will be first. The context here is that two of his closest mates, James and John, ask if they can sit next to him in heaven. That is, they rather arrogantly want the most honoured positions in heaven. This is a big ask, and Jesus says it is not for him to decide. While entry into God's kingdom is free, there are suggestions throughout the Bible that places of such high honour are effectively earned by giving up a lot in this world for God. Jesus asks James and John if they can make the sacrifice he will have to make, and without realising that Jesus is talking about being crucified, they say they can. Of course, Jesus actually knows what will happen to these two, James will be martyred by king Herod in Acts 12, and while Jesus knows what happened to John, we are not so sure. Tradition has it that John willingly accepted martyrdom by being plunged into boiling hot oil, but he was miraculously preserved from harm, and went on to live a long life. We do know he eventually ended up on the island of Patmos where he wrote the book of Revelation. He was willing to suffer and die for Christ, even though Christ didn't require him to be martyred in boiling oil.

Getting back to Mark's gospel, Jesus tells James and John that whoever wants to become great must be a servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. He goes on to say that even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. So, the Christian idea of leadership is servant leadership - leading people by serving them. Last week we saw this demonstrated on Maundy Thursday at our foot washing service. Jesus set the example of personally performing the most menial activity required of a slave - washing the grime from his followers feet. If we are to follow Jesus's example, we can't be hard-hearted towards the people we are serving. We must demonstrate our compassion for their every need, and our priorities must be their needs, not our wants.

### **Blind Bartimaeus**

The final episode in our reading this morning is the story of the healing of Blind Bartimaeus. He asked Jesus for mercy, to see, and Jesus wasn't hard hearted, but healed him.

I imagine that if I were in Bartimaeus's shoes, I would show a hardness of heart to Jesus even as he offered to heal me. I admit I am fiercely independent and find it extremely difficult to accept that I need help from anyone. Part of this is being a spendthrift who won't pay anyone to

do something i can do myself - no matter how much a hash I make of the job, but more significantly it is my pride. I hate to admit when I need help, even if it is obvious to everyone else.

### **Jesus predicts his death and resurrection**

This brings us back to the section I skipped a minute ago. You remember that I briefly skipped over Jesus predicting his death and resurrection. Well, this is the crux of the way he served everyone of his followers from the day he died until he returns - dying and rising again for them. He held no hardness of heart towards any of the people who rejected the rightful lordship of God the Father over their lives, he just quietly let himself be executed, be torn away from the perfect relationship he had had in the Trinity for all eternity, took the punishment for all people's sin and rejection in himself so that all might receive their salvation.

### **Conclusion**

This morning I have talked a lot about hardness of heart from this chapter of Mark. We also read in our Old Testament reading how Pharaoh's heart was hardened so that he wouldn't let the Israelites go, despite the ten devastating plagues that God sent. But what have we learnt about hardened hearts?

On a human level, Jesus shows us that we must not harden our hearts against anyone that God brings before us - children, the poor, those who are seen as the least in this world, and even our marriage partners - our husbands or wives. We must not hinder any of these from entering the kingdom of God, and in fact there is much we can learn from them - children, the poor, the least, about the attitude we must have in order to enter God's kingdom.

And this is the second lesson we can learn from this passage - we ourselves must not harden our hearts against those who strive to help us - to aid and teach us what we must learn in order to enter the kingdom. There is no point in bull headedly and so fiercely independent that we don't accept help that is freely offered, and ultimately will bring us much gain. Ultimately, we need to be like Bartimaeus - humbly asking for mercy and accepting God's free gift of forgiveness.

The final lesson is to understand that despite our sin and rejection of him, Jesus is not hard-hearted against anyone, but died and rose again for us while we were still sinners. We cannot be like rich people who arrogantly consider that they don't need help to enter God's kingdom.

As the Book of Hebrews chapter 3 tells us: <sup>12</sup> See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. <sup>14</sup> We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. <sup>15</sup> As has just been said:

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." Hebrews 3:12-15

So let each of us examine our hearts, and ensure they are not hardened to those around us, or to God, whose promise of entering his kingdom through Jesus's death and resurrection still stands.

Amen