

**Sunday 29 September 2024 HC 2.1 (Sung responses)**

**Introduction**

**Hymn – TIS 121 God Himself is present**

**God Himself is present:**

**Let us now adore Him, As with awe come before Him.**

**God is in our midst now; In our hearts keep silence;  
worshipping in deepest reverence.**

**Him we know, Him we name**

**Come and let us make him Our renewed surrender.**

**O majestic Being,**

**I would praise you duly and my service render to you**

**In the selfsame spirit as the holy angels,**

**ever standing in your presence.**

**Grant me now, So to strive**

**evermore to please you dearest God, in all things.**

**Let your glorious light, Lord,**

**permeating all things, reach my face and eyes to touch them;**

**as the tender flowers open out their petals,**

**to the sun their hearts unfolding,**

**so may I, calm in joy,**

**hold your rays from heaven power within me working.**

**Lord, make me your dwelling,**

**let my heart and spirit be for you an earthly temple:**

**come, Immediate Being, my whole life illumine,**

**so I'll always praise and love you,**

**so where'er, I may be**

**there I may perceive you, ever bow before you.**

**The Grace**

**of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you.**

**And also with you.**

**'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.'**

**Lord have mercy on us, and write your law in our hearts by your Holy Spirit.**

**[Sung] Lord, Have mercy x3**

**Christ, have mercy x3**

**Lord, have mercy x3**

**The Gloria (sung)**

**Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth**

**Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father,**

**we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father**

**Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;**

**you are seated at the right hand of God the Father: receive our prayer.**

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the most high, Jesus Christ, with the holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father, Amen

### Sentence of the Day

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Acts 8:30-31

### 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.**

### Prayer of the Day

O God, from whom light rises in darkness for those who seek you: grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us do, that in your light we may see light, and in your narrow path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

### Isaiah 56:3-8

3 Let no foreigner who is bound to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely exclude me from his people." And let no eunuch complain, "I am only a dry tree." 4 For this is what the LORD says: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant — 5 to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever. 6 And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant— 7 these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." 8 The Sovereign LORD declares— he who gathers the exiles of Israel: "I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered."

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

### Psalms 87

<sup>1</sup> He has founded it upon a holy hill:

**and the LORD loves the gates of Zion  
more than all the dwellings of Jacob.**

<sup>2</sup> Glorious things shall be spoken of you:

**O Zion, city of our God**

<sup>3</sup> I might speak of my kindred in Egypt or in Babylon:  
**in Philistia, Tyre, or Nubia, where each was born.**

<sup>4</sup> But of Zion it shall be said:

**many were born in her,  
he that is Most High has established her.**

<sup>5</sup> When the LORD draws up the record of the nations:

**He shall take note where everyone was born.**

<sup>6</sup> And the singers and dancers together:

**shall make their song to your name.**

### Acts 8:1-13

1 And Saul approved of their killing him.

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. 2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.

3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. 5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7 For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city.

9 Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, 10 and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is rightly called the Great Power of God." 11 They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. 12 But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

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

### Luke 21:12-19

12 "But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. 13 And so you will bear testimony to me. 14 But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. 15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. 16 You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. 17 Everyone will hate you because of me. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 Stand firm, and you will win life.

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

### Sermon - Ephesians 8: Taking The Opportunities that God Gives Question Time

#### The Apostles Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

#### The Prayers of the People

Let us pray for the world and the church

**Response:** Christ Jesus, intercede for us, and in your mercy. **Hear our 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.**

### Scripture Sentence

Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one, so that your Father who is in heaven may forgive your trespasses. Mark 11:25

### 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

The Spirit of truth comes to convict us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement. Let us open our hearts and 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.**

### Agnus Dei (sung)

**Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.**

**Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.**

**Jesus, Redeemer of the world, grant us your peace.**

### 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 – TIS 578 How firm a foundation

**1 How firm a foundation, you people of God,  
is laid for your faith in his excellent word;  
what more can he say than to you he has said,  
to all who for refuge to Jesus have fled?**

**2 Fear not, he is with you, and be not dismayed,  
for he is your God and will still give you aid:  
he'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand,  
upheld by his righteous, omnipotent hand.**

**3 When through the deep waters he calls you to go,  
the rivers of grief shall not you overflow;  
the Lord will be with you in trouble to bless,  
and sanctify to you your deepest distress.**

**4 When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie  
his grace, all-sufficient shall be your supply;  
the flame shall not hurt you, his only design  
your dross to consume and your gold to refine.**

**5 The soul that on Jesus still leans for repose  
he will not, he cannot, desert to its foes;  
that soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
he never will leave, he will never forsake.**

### **Thanksgiving for Offering**

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

**Blessed be God for ever.**

### **The Great 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.**

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty Creator, everliving God.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us. By his death on the cross, he offered the one true sacrifice for sin, and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.

Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

**[Sung]Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

Merciful God, we thank you for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine, and we pray that by your Word and Holy Spirit, we who eat and drink them may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread; and when he had given you thanks he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples, saying, Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

**[Sung]Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded: proclaiming his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming again, we celebrate, with this bread and this cup, his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Renew us by your Holy Spirit, unite us in the body of your Son and bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, and in whom, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father, in songs of never-ending praise:

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

### **The Holy Communion**

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one bread: so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

**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. Grape juice is available.

Please come to the Communion Rail if you are able, observing appropriate social distancing.

### **After Communion**

Gracious God, we thank you that in this sacrament you assure us of your goodness and love. Accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and help us to grow in love and obedience that we may serve you in the world and finally be brought to that table where all your saints feast with you for ever.

**Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen**

### **Notices**

#### **Hymn – TIS 446 Glorious things of you are spoken (tune Austria)**

**Glorious things of you are spoken, Zion, city of our God!**

**He whose word cannot be broken, Formed you for his own abode:**

**On the Rock of Ages founded, What can shake your sure repose?**

**With salvation's walls surrounded, You may smile at all your foes.**

**See, the streams of living waters Springing from eternal love,**

**Well supply your sons and daughters, And all fear of want remove:**

**Who can faint, while such a river Ever flows their thirst to assuage --**

**Grace, which, like the Lord, the giver, Never fails from age to age.**

**Blest inhabitants of Zion, Washed in their Redeemer's blood!**

**Jesus, whom their souls rely on, Makes them kings and priests to God.**

**For his love his people raises Over self to reign as kings:**

**And as priests, his solemn praises, each for a thank-offering brings.**

**Saviour, since of Zion's city I through grace a member am,**

**Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in your name.**

**Fading are the worldlings' pleasures, All their boasted pomp and show;**

**Solid joys and lasting treasures None but Zion's children know.**

### **Blessing**

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**

### **Dismissal**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

## Sermon - Acts 8 - Taking The Opportunities that God Gives

Are you a procrastinator? Do you take forever to start a job that you really know you need to do? When I was still working in my previous secular job, I was leading and preaching in a small church every couple of weeks, but usually wouldn't finish writing the sermon until early on the Sunday morning a few hours before the services. I used to say that I work best under a bit of pressure, but in reality it was probably that I had procrastinated so much during the week that I only started writing the sermon on Saturday night when I couldn't possibly wait any longer. Needless to say, both my sermons, and my ministry on Sunday mornings suffered as a result.

Do you ever find that circumstances push you to do things that you know you should have been doing all along?

The early believers know their mission was to preach the gospel to all nations. Before Jesus had ascended to heaven he had told the believers to remain in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came, and they had done this, but Jesus had also told them in Acts 1:8 "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

We heard 6 weeks ago how the Holy Spirit had come on the day of Pentecost, and every week since we have been hearing how the gospel was being preached in Jerusalem. But why wasn't it going out to all Judea, Samaria or the ends of the earth? It seems the apostles were too busy in the new church and needed a bit of a push. Part of that push came last week when the matter of distributing food to the Greek widows came to a head and Stephen and the other administrators were appointed and a load was taken off the apostles.

But this wasn't enough, and in today's reading there was an even bigger push. We heard last week that one of the new administrators, Stephen, was martyred. This week we heard that a young fellow called Saul approved of Stephen's death, and it prompted him to instigate a huge program of persecution against the church in Jerusalem. Saul sought to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

Despite the tragedy of this persecution, it was the impetus the church needed to break out of Jerusalem and set foot for the rest of Judea, Samaria, and ultimately, to the ends of the whole world.

You see, because of the persecution, Philip, another of the administrators, went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed Jesus there. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7 For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city.

The gospel was on the move and the church had now made its way to Samaria! People of that particular city believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. The apostles who remained back in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, and they sent Peter and John to Samaria. 15 When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them. Peter and John placed their hands on the new believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit was moving, but it is important to recognise that it wasn't a matter of growth at any cost for the church. The model of church planting was that believers from the church in Jerusalem would plant churches in new towns by preaching the gospel and appointing godly men as leaders before moving on. These leaders were obviously critical to the formation of the new church and had to have impeccable character.

A fellow known as Simon the Sorcerer heard Philip preaching the gospel and really believed. He was baptised and put his hand up for leadership, but he didn't make the cut. While he demonstrated a huge influence, and there was no reason to believe he hadn't truly believed and become a Christian, he thought he could buy leadership in the church with money. This really showed to Peter that he wasn't up to leadership, he was severely rebuked, and disqualified for the job.

After this episode in this city in Samaria, we get to the interesting account of Philip and the Ethiopian. It wasn't read out this morning due to time constraints, but basically an angel told Philip to go south to a certain road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. Well, we all know where Gaza is today, and Philip was going there. He met an important Ethiopian official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man was obviously a convert to Judaism because he had been worshipping in Jerusalem, and was reading



his Bible on the way home. Philip explained to him that the passage he was reading should point him to Christ, and he insisted on getting baptised straight away.

Both Philip and the Ethiopian took advantage of the opportunities that God gave them. Philip noticed that the Ethiopian was reading from scripture, and a very specific prophecy about Jesus to boot, and the Ethiopian noticed that there was water suitable for baptism, and so wanted to be baptised.

Today we have learnt two really important lessons for our church. In the first and the third episode we learnt the importance of taking the opportunities that God gives us. The early Church took advantage of the persecution they had experienced to get on with the job they had been given, and to get on with taking the gospel to Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. Members of the church went to Judea and Samaria, and Philip specifically went to Samaria, and by noticing that a Ethiopian in a chariot was reading the Scriptures, started the gospel on its journey to the ends of the earth, and ultimately, we, half a world away in Cooma, are beneficiaries of that journey.

Peter also shows us the importance of the integrity of our leadership in the church. Sure, it's important that churches are established and grow, and charismatic leaders can really help in that. However poor leadership will destroy churches. Our church here in Cooma is looking for long term leadership, and it is absolutely critical that we find the right leadership, even if it takes time.

Learning both lessons was critical for the growth of the early church, and critical for the growth of Cooma Anglican. In the light of what we have learnt from acts 8, let us make the most of every opportunity for the gospel, and through prayer and action, let us ensure we get Godly leadership with integrity.

Amen