

SUNDAY 26 October 2025 - St Paul's Cooma 9.30am

Introduction

Hymn - TIS 153 - God is love let heaven adore Him

**God is love let heaven adore Him, God is love let earth rejoice
Let creation sing before Him and exalt Him with one voice
God who laid the earth's foundation, He who spread the heavens above
and who breathes through all creation, God is love, eternal love**

**God is love, and gently enfolding all the world in one embrace,
with unfailing grasp is holding every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking under sorrow's iron rod,
then they find that selfsame aching deep within the heart of God.**

**God is love, and, though with blindness, sin afflicts our human hearts,
God's eternal lovingkindness, holding, guiding, grace imparts.
Sin and death and hell shall never o'er us final triumph gain;
God is love, so love for ever o'er the universe must reign.**

Greeting

Blessed be God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.

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

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith. Romans 12:6

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 and everlasting God, give us the increase of faith, hope and love; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us to love what you command, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

The Ministry of the Word

Joel 2:26-32 (NIV)

²⁶ You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed. ²⁷ Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed.

²⁸ “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. ³⁰ I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

³¹ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. ³² And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

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

Psalms 33:1-15 (NIV)

¹ Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.

² **Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.**

³ Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.

⁴ **For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.**

⁵ The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.

⁶ **By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.**

⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses.

⁸ **Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him.**

⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

¹⁰ **The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.**

¹¹ But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

¹² **Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.**

¹³ From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind;

¹⁴ **from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth—**

¹⁵ **he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.**

Romans 12:3-8 (NIV)

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to

all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

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

Matthew 11:7-15 (NIV)

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

⁷ As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? ⁸ If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. ⁹ Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'" ¹¹ Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it. ¹³ For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. ¹⁵ Whoever has ears, let them hear.

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

Sermon - Romans 12:3-8 - Gifts of Grace - Prophesying

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God the Father, 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.

Prayers

Let us pray for the world and the church.

Response: God of Peace, 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 Preparation

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 - TIS 609 - May the mind of Christ, my Saviour

**May the mind of Christ, my Saviour, Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling all I do and say.**

**May the Word of God dwell richly In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph only through His power.**

**May the peace of God my Father Rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort sick and sorrowing.**

**May the love of Jesus fill me, as the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing. This is victory.**

**May I run the race before me, strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus, as I onward go.**

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.

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 - TIS 454 - Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness

**Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
gold of obedience and incense of lowliness
bring, and adore him: the Lord is his name.**

**Low at his feet lay your burden of carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for you,
comfort your sorrows, and answer your prayerfulness,
guiding your steps in the way best for you.**

**Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
of the poor wealth you would reckon to own:
truth in its beauty and love in its tenderness,
these are the offerings to bring to his throne.**

**These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,
he will accept for the name that is dear,
mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
trust for our trembling, and hope for our fear.**

**Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
gold of obedience and incense of lowliness
bring, and adore him: the Lord is his name.**

Notices

Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the love of God, and the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you always **Amen**

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

Sermon - Gifts of Grace - Prophecy - Romans 12:3-8

Today I am starting a new sermon series that I have entitled "Gifts of Grace" and is based on Romans chapter 12 verses 3 through 8. I normally consider it bad practice to preach from the middle (or in this case, three quarters of the way through a book of the Bible), because we miss out on the context of the passage. In this case, as we heard the reading earlier, we hear what Paul is exhorting us to do, but we don't really hear why. Romans 12:3-8 is one application of the gospel message that Paul has been explaining in the previous 11 chapters. If we were to just do the what without understanding the why, then we could end up as extremely unbalanced Christians.

The book of Romans had been described as "the chief part of the New Testament and is truly the purest gospel," by Martin Luther, while John Calvin stated that, "When any one understands this Epistle, he has a passage opened to him to the understanding of the whole Scripture". Other powerful quotes include J.I. Packer's "All roads in the Bible lead to Romans..." and John Piper's description of it as "the most important theological, Christian work ever written."

To counter the potential imbalance somewhat, I am going to start this sermon with a bit of a summary of Romans, noting that I will try to summarise in a few minutes that which Martin Lloyd Jones, a mid twentieth century Welsh preacher, took 13 years to preach, taking a week or more to preach on each of the 433 verses.

Romans can be divided into four sections: righteousness needed, how every human being fails to meet God's standard and will suffer his wrath for our unrighteousness (1:18-3:20); how righteousness is provided through, and only through faith in Jesus's death and resurrection for both Jews (or God's chosen people) and gentiles(3:21-8:39). That righteousness to Jew and Gentile is shown as vindicated in chapters 9:1-11:36, and shown how to be practiced now the church comprises both Jew and Gentiles in chapters 12 through to the end. Since we are looking at chapter 12, we are looking at how to practise the righteousness whose necessity, provision and vindication is explained in chapters 1 through 11.

The difference between Jew and gentile is a big issue for Paul, and particularly for the church where Jews who felt they were born into their salvation, and gentiles who are grafted in need to live and work together as one in Christ. This is key to practising righteousness in chapter 12.

Since many churches today are entirely made up of Gentiles, in the context of today's church, one way of looking at this is how second or later generational Christians (those brought up in Christians families) correspond to Jews) do church with new converts (who correspond to Gentiles).

As I mentioned, Romans 12 teaches how we do church as Jews and Gentiles, or new converts and later generational Christians. It gives us different gifts we should exercise to smoothly do church comprising second generational and new Christians, and it specifically mentions prophesying, serving, teaching,

encouraging, giving, leading and showing mercy. Both new and second generational Christians can do these things equally well and easily in the power of the Holy Spirit. I will look at 5 of these gifts over the next five weeks, and today we look at prophesying. However, before we look at what Paul is saying about prophesying in the early church, it helps to look at prophecy in the Old Testament.

In the Old testament, there were people specifically called by God to prophesy: the prophets. Essentially the prophets told people what God had told the prophet. Often the prophecies were about what was in the hearers' future, and so included an element of prediction - foretelling the future. This is not surprising since only God fully knows the future, and true prophets related the messages of God. However, prediction was not the key attribute of the message. The important thing about the prophet's message was that it was the word of God, whether it concerned the future, the present or the past.

It is also important that according to Deuteronomy 13, there are two signs of a true prophet. First, he must not direct people to follow other gods. Second, whenever the prophet says something about future events, those events must come to pass. If the prophet promotes the worship of false gods, or if his predictions fail to come to pass, then he is a false prophet. Sometimes these false prophets were called soothsayers or seers, particularly when they were associated with false gods.

Incidentally the last of the Old Testament prophets is actually found in the New Testament. In Matthew's gospel, which we read this morning, Jesus says that John the Baptist is the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets, because he prophesied before Jesus was crucified and was resurrected. Prior to John, there hadn't been any Old Testament prophets for about 460 years since the prophet Malachi.

After Jesus's crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and Pentecost, the early church was established. It needed people with certain gifts in order to run effectively. Ephesians 4 says God gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the church, the body of Christ,

Many people argue that apostles in particular, and sometimes prophets as well, were only appointed by God for the early church, and no longer required once the early church was established, which happened around the time the original apostles like Peter, Andrew, James, John, as well as Paul died, Herod's temple was destroyed in AD70, or perhaps once all the books of the New Testament were written. It also seems that miracles such as miraculous healings and true speaking in miraculous tongues also finished, or at least became less prominent around the same time. If this is the case, particularly with prophecy, what is our passage of Romans telling us? Is it encouraging prophecy, but only in the nascent church?

That could be the case if we consider prophecy to be miraculous predictions of the future as some do. Some people disagree and say that these still continue,

particularly if they claim to have a prophetic ministry of this nature. The internet has numerous examples of people claiming this gift of miraculous prediction, as well of those claiming to be modern day apostles, but I would suggest that most of them are not pointing people to God but to themselves, and that their predictions do not come true, or are so vague that they cannot be tested.

Whether miraculous gifts of prediction did cease in the early church, it is clear that there is a modern prophetic function that continues today. I said that prophesying was telling God's message, and not just prediction, and at the very least speaking messages from God that those prophesying have discerned from God's word, the Bible, does continue. That is exactly what we still do every Sunday morning from this pulpit, to proclaim God's message from his word, and that's what I pray every pulpit in every church around the world is doing - exercising prophetic ministries by preaching God's word. This may include a predictive element, such as eternal life for those who believe in Jesus, but it isn't strictly necessary.

It is not to preachers or even speaking from church pulpits. It happens in personal conversations, on the internet and television and any context where people share God's word one to one or with small or large groups. Paul said "If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith" which I take it means that any Christian may have the gift of prophecy and should therefore prophesy in accordance with their faith. Paul also says that every Christian should eagerly desire the gift of prophecy, but he also makes it clear that not everyone has the gift of prophecy. I, like Paul, desire that every Christian in Cooma Anglican would prophesy, although I recognise that not everyone has the gift.

You may be asking what does prophesying sound like? A key verse is 1 Corinthians 14:3 says that "the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort."

I pray that everyone at Cooma Anglican with the gift would strengthen, encourage and comfort each other with God's message, that each of us would strive to exercise a prophetic ministry.

We should seek to strengthen each other with God's message. As we see each other struggling with the challenges of everyday life. In Acts 15:32 (NIV) 32 Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. We too can do this, perhaps by reminding each other of passages like 2 Thessalonians 3:3 (NIV) "But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one." We can remind each of the of the reality and role of the Holy Spirit in strengthening the faith of believers, and even biblical examples of how disciples and early believers were strengthened through their faith through the incredible hardships that they suffered. We have to be careful to avoid too closely linking our situations with theirs, because we may not necessarily be strengthened in the same ways, but

God's message certainly can strengthen us in our faith, strengthening us to pray and to persevere.

Sharing God's message will also encourage our Christian brothers and sisters, again like Judas and Silas did. Paul encourages the Thessalonians who were worried that Jesus hadn't returned yet with instruction about Jesus's return 1 Thessalonians 4:16 (NIV) that "the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." Paul also is always at pains to encourage the churches in his letters, sometimes the disheartened, sometimes specific groups, like young men who need to be self controlled. He always encourages with sound doctrine. Similarly, we should encourage each other in our faith, with sound doctrine from the word of God.

God's message also comforts, and in our prophetic ministry, we also should comfort our brothers and sisters from his message. In 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 (NIV) Paul "praises the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 and reminds the Corinthians that he comforts us in all our troubles." We can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God through his Word. "For just as Paul shared abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer." An Paul's and our hope is firm, because we know that just as we share in our sufferings, so also we share in our comfort."

There are many other situations which God's word can speak into, and we all should desire to exercise a prophetic ministry. We can debate whether the office of prophet continues in the sense of miraculous predictions, but there is no doubt that God has given us his word not only for ourselves, but also to strengthen, encourage and comfort others of his people. God intended is to bring his message to those he wants to hear it, which I take is everyone, even though some will not listen.

That message may predict future events, such as Jesus's return, judgement and eternal life, which we can be sure from his Word will come about. He also says we cannot be sure of details like dates and times, so these should never form part of our prophecies.

But God does promise that his message, the message from his Word, will strengthen, encourage and comfort his people. My prayer is that everyone in this church, and in fact every Christian will seek to exercise this gift of prophesying, and as a consequence, that this church, and in fact the world wide church of all believers will be edified - will be built up in the knowledge and love of Christ and persevere to eternal life through Jesus's death and resurrection paying the ransom for all our sin.

Will you all strive to share in this ministry of prophesying God's word?