

SUNDAY 23 November 2025 - St Paul's Cooma 9.30am

Introduction

Hymn - TIS 61 - Sing, all creation

**Sing, all creation, sing to God in gladness,
joyously serve him, singing hymns of homage,
chanting his praises, come before his presence:
Praise the Almighty!**

**Know that our God, is Lord of all the ages;
he is our maker: we are all his creatures,
people he fashioned, sheep he leads to pasture:
Praise the Almighty!**

**Enter his temple, ringing out his praises;
sing in thanksgiving as you come before him;
blessing his bounty, glorify his greatness:
Praise the Almighty!**

**Great in his goodness is the Lord we worship;
steadfast his kindness, love that knows no ending;
faithful his word is, changeless, everlasting:
Praise the Almighty!**

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

Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 2 Corinthians 9:13

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

Eternal God, you exalted Jesus Christ to rule over all things, and have made us instruments of your kingdom; by your Spirit empower us to love the unloved, and to minister to all in need, then at the last bring us to your eternal realm where we may be welcomed into everlasting joy and may worship and adore you for ever; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

The Ministry of the Word

Nehemiah 12:44-47 (NIV)

⁴⁴ At that time men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the contributions, firstfruits and tithes. From the fields around the towns they were to bring into the storerooms the portions required by the Law for the priests and the Levites, for Judah was pleased with the ministering priests and Levites. ⁴⁵ They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did also the musicians and gatekeepers, according to the commands of David and his son Solomon. ⁴⁶ For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors for the musicians and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. ⁴⁷ So in the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, all Israel contributed the daily portions for the musicians and the gatekeepers. They also set aside the portion for the other Levites, and the Levites set aside the portion for the descendants of Aaron.

Psalm 112:1-10 (NIV)

¹ Praise the LORD. Blessed are those who fear the LORD, who find great delight in his commands.

² **Their children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.**

³ Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever.

⁴ **Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous.**

⁵ Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice.

⁶ **Surely the righteous will never be shaken; they will be remembered forever.**

⁷ They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

⁸ **Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.**

⁹ They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor, their righteousness endures forever; their horn will be lifted high in honor.

¹⁰ **The wicked will see and be vexed, they will gnash their teeth and waste away; the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.**

2 Corinthians 9:10-15 (NIV)

¹⁰ Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

¹² This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. ¹³ Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. ¹⁴ And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

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

Luke 3:7-11(NIV)

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

⁷ John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ⁹ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰ "What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

¹¹ John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

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

Sermon - Gifts of Grace - Giving

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 59 - All people that on earth do dwell

All people that on earth do dwell,
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell;
come ye before him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed;
without our aid he did us make:
we are his folk, he doth us feed,
and for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter then his gates with praise,
approach with joy his courts unto;

praise, laud and bless his name always,
for it is seemly so to do.

For why the Lord our God is good;
his mercy is for ever sure;
his truth at all times firmly stood,
and shall from age to age endure.

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

**My heart and voice I raise, To spread Messiah's praise;
Messiah's praise let all repeat; The universal Lord,
By whose almighty word, Creation rose in form complete.**

**A servant's form he wore, And in his body bore
Our dreadful curse on Calvary: He like a victim stood,
And poured his sacred blood, To set the guilty captives free.**

**But soon the Victor rose Triumphant o'er his foes,
And led the vanquished host in chains: He threw their empire down,
His foes compelled to own, O'er all the great Messiah reigns.**

**With mercy's mildest grace, He governs all our race
In wisdom, righteousness, and love: Who to Messiah fly
Shall find redemption nigh, And all his great salvation prove.**

**Hail, Saviour, Prince of peace! Thy kingdom shall increase,
Till all the world your glory see; And righteousness abound,
As the great deep profound, And fill the earth with purity!**

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 - Giving generously

As we've been looking at for the last 4 weeks or so, Romans 12 encourages all who have gifts of grace to use them to build up the church. Today we will examine what it means that those who have the gift of giving are to give generously. It is no coincidence that I have chosen today, our designated Mission Sunday to talk about giving as giving to mission is an important part of Christian giving. I realise that it is not practical for many of us here to become missionaries in the classical sense, that is overseas, or even in the unchurched regions of outback Australia, but we can all be involved in mission here in Cooma, and particularly by giving to mission societies that send Christians to the mission fields wherever they are needed, be it overseas or in Australia. So today I want to particularly focus on giving to the church's mission.

Why Give?

But firstly, why should Christians give, and specifically generously give to Christian missions?

Well, God gives everything we have to us, and increases our seeds and food so we can be generous to others on every occasion. Romans 8:32 tells us *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?* Romans 8:32

Since the God who made the entire universe and everything in it has generously given us everything we need and more, including salvation through his Son Jesus Christ, shouldn't we be generous in our giving, sharing so that others may share in the salvation that we enjoy?

So, as we have been reading in Romans 12, those who have the gift of giving should give to build up the body of which we are all members, the church. Each of us belongs to all the other members of the church and so we should, as 1 Corinthians 14 tells us, *try to excel in those gifts that build up the church.*

As I see it, excelling in giving to build up the church can be done in three ways: Firstly, we should give so that God's word, the word of truth, is proclaimed amongst believers and amongst not-yet believers. John 4:23 tells us this is true worship. It is prophecy in the church (like we discussed a few weeks ago), intelligible words that edify and build up the church as 1 Corinthians 14:12 tells us when exercising our gifts of prophecy or by supporting those who do have the gift.

Also, we should give as our Christian witness to the world. Our giving can support God's word being spread as it is *the service by which Christians have proven themselves* (2 Cor 10:13). We follow Jesus's example as we give to feed the hungry, heal the sick and care for the marginalized, and of course that is reason enough of itself. However, when we generously give to support those outside the church they *will praise God for the obedience that accompanies our confession of the gospel of Christ, and for our generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else*, as 2 Corinthians 9:12-13 tells us. As we give, particularly to those in need, we make unbelievers receptive to the gospel and

ultimately help them put their faith in Christ and worship God. This contributed to the success of the early church as people were attracted to the church that cared for the marginalised: women, slaves, the poor, sick and disabled.

Also, generous giving supports Christians who directly plant the seeds of the gospel in not yet believers' lives. Jesus's Great Commission in Mat 28:19-20 enjoins Christians to go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that Jesus has commanded us. If we do not have the opportunity ourselves to go to the nations in this way, our giving to missions supports those that do.

So, we give as our true worship, to build up the church, and we give as a witness of Christ to the world, preparing hearts to hear the gospel, and to allow the proclamation of the gospel where it needs to be heard.

Who should we give to?

If these are reasons why we should give as Christians, who should we give to?

In order to support prophecy in this church, and its expression of our true worship, we are called to give financially to our church. We usually do this through the red box at the back, or electronically. The majority of the money you give to this church pays for the minister's stipend, costs of ministry resources and maintaining and operating our property, our buildings. This parish also sets aside some of what you give to support other missions, such as our CMS link missionaries, chaplaincy in our locals schools and so on.

We pay ministers a wage that frees me to minister in our churches in Cooma, as well as Bredbo, Jerangle, Numeralla, Nimmitabel and Adaminaby, and the services I lead at Hudson House and Yallambee. It gives me time not earning another living wage to prepare and lead the services and the sermons (which are teaching and prophecy). It also allows me to provide pastoral care to parishioners, and to some outside the church: the suffering and sick, the dying, the bereaved, and to minister in the general community so that people can hear and respond to the gospel.

Giving to this church helps to build up the believers here, whether they be new converts or those established in the faith. Pastoral care particularly supports Christians who are struggling, like Paul did in Acts 20:35 where the hard work of his own hands helped the weak, as he remembered the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Numerous other ministry organisations, such as the mission that supports our Cambodian child, Barnabas Fund, Tear Fund and similar also serve Christians that are struggling that we would find it hard to support directly.

Our giving can also include Mission Societies that send out missionaries that witness to the world in places and cultures where it is hard to hear the gospel. The Church Missionary Society, the missionary arm of the Anglican church in Australia sends out missionaries like Klaus and Jude Hickel who are proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ in Leipzig, Germany. In the 200 years since being established in Australia, CMS Australia has sent over 1,700 missionaries to

approximately 80 different countries and continues to work with churches to set apart godly people as long-term, cross-cultural gospel workers.

The Bush Church Aid Society (BCA) has a similar role in the Australian Bush. BCA is all about aid to the Church in the Bush; providing biblically faithful ministry and bringing the life-changing gospel message of Jesus to rural, regional, and remote Australia. It is currently supporting Trent Magrath at the Village Church in Jindabyne, a thriving church plant where there had been a distinct lack of ministry before.

There are other missions that have different focusses that we can give to. For example, The Bible Society, which exists to impact and influence Australia and the World by Opening The Bible to all people everywhere by all means possible. The Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students, AFES has a particular emphasis bringing the gospel to tertiary students in Australia and supporting Christians in their formative years. The Far East Broadcasting Company communicates the Good News among the nations by media to inspire people to follow Jesus Christ in more than 100 languages and across 50+ countries originally by radio, but now more and more via the Internet. Many of their listeners are persecuted for their faith and they aim to support their listeners through all trials, whatever they may be. Prison fellowship and its angel tree program is another mission with a specific focus that this parish supports.

There are numerous other Christian agencies that we can support, and I have only highlighted these ones because I and our church have been specifically involved with them - colleagues of mine have been sent out by these agencies, or I and this church have chosen to support them by prayer and financially after investigating them. I am sure you are aware of other organisations that are equally devoted to growing the kingdom of God and worthy of our support.

This brings me to the final question about our Christian giving: How should we give?

This first thing I would want to say about giving is that it should be done wisely. I have talked about numerous different mission societies, charities, and even this church that are competing for your giving. Even if you could support them all, it would not necessarily be wise. Giving to too many recipients can incur excessive transaction costs which can decrease the effectiveness of your giving, but more importantly, your giving would not be prioritised. It is between you and God how you prioritise your giving, but agencies that have high administrative costs and low money effectiveness should be low on your lists. Your prioritisation might also be based on the specific mission of different agencies you might support, things that God has laid on your heart to support. It might be specific countries, or age or employment groups or even reaching out to persecuted Christians. Based on Matthew 6:33, which tells us you seek first good kingdom, I personally prioritise agencies that preach the gospel higher than those that, although Christian, only provide social or welfare support. I also prioritise overtly Christian organisations over others.

Once we have determined from our priorities who we are going to support, Romans 12 says that we should give generously. This is because God is infinitely generous in giving to us, giving us his one and only son to pay the price for our rebellion, and so we should reflect this generosity in our giving.

2 Corinthians 9:7 tells us that God loves a cheerful giver, so we should give cheerfully. Our giving should not be begrudgingly, but 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion.

There is also great value in giving consistently by putting a little aside each pay period (whether you give weekly, fortnightly, monthly or whatever) in keeping with your income, as 1Cor16:2 tells us. Probably the easiest ways to do this is via electronic banking, where you can set up a regular payment the will be made so long as there are sufficient funds in your account. If you do use this method, it is important that you regularly review the amount you give to ensure it is still in keeping with your income as it goes up or down. It is not wise to give beyond your means for obvious reasons, but if your income increases significantly, it is good to be more generous in supporting God's work.

Finally, Matt 6:1-4 tells us to give secretly, not in front of others to be seen by them. Our giving is between us and God, and isn't to be the basis to boast or gain brownie points with others. I have said many times that I have no idea how much any of you gives, and I don't want to know. Even if it were only subconsciously, I don't want the amount that you give to affect the way I minister to you, so it is best if I, as well as other leadership in this church do not know. That why we use the box at the back rather than open plates, and I am never told how much people are giving electronically.

There are probably other factors that should guide how you give to God work, and each of you probably gives differently. Nevertheless, giving for all of us should be done wisely, generously, cheerfully, consistently and secretly. We all have a part to play in the church's mission of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ so that people may be forgiven and gain eternal life. I am sure we are all trying to do this as much as we can amongst our families, friends, neighbourhood and workplaces, but we should also seek to support those who proclaim the gospel and support Christians and those in need where we cannot practically do it directly. We also need to give prayerfully, continually praying that our generosity results in Thanksgiving to God by those who already have faith in Jesus for salvation that Wed support, as well as those who come to faith in Jesus as a fruit of our generosity.

Can I encourage you at this time to consider your giving, that is aligns with all the principles I have been talking about today?

Amen