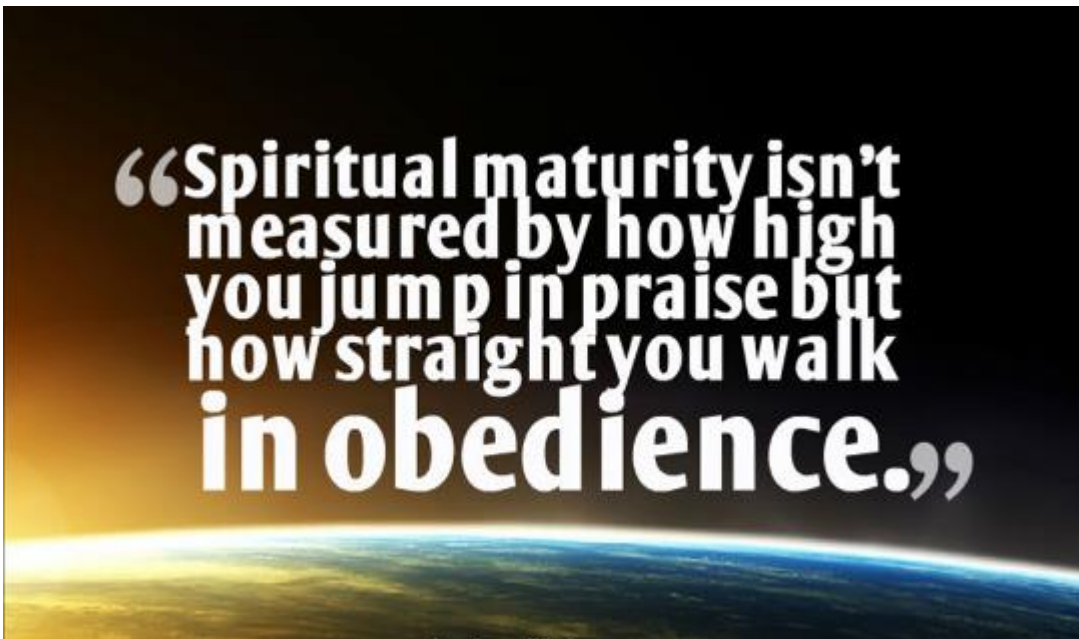


Dear Beloved,

How much have you grown since you first recognised Jesus as Lord? I hope and pray that each one of you continues to grow in faith and love all your lives.



This week I will be on my annual clergy retreat (required), Monday to Friday, so won't be in the Parish. Lorraine will take the Wednesday service and everything will be back to normal next week.

blessings

Wendy

AGMS

Jerangle 25th March

Parish 2nd April

--

Morning Tea

after the Service

every 2nd and 4th Sunday

please volunteer

for the roster.

--

Wendy has Lent Study Books

for group or private use.

They are \$12 each

Please see Wendy

--

No Lent studies in Rectory

this year

but please join

an existing group

or form your own.

--

Autumn Open Garden Day
16th April
Please pot plants up now
and tell Nella how you can help

--

Midweek Services
every Wednesday at 9.30
all Welcome

--

Please volunteer
for the roster,
well in advance.

--

Prayer and Praise

Wendy

Edith and Colin Mayhew

--

Glenn Fletcher .. for his recovery

our wardens and Parish Councillors

--

Scott's wife Jennie.

Beattie Russell
and Jenni Roberts
in Yallambie.

--

Leanne Lowery

Mary Mitchell

--

Peter & Julie Harris from Bredbo

all congregations in Cooma

--

The New Catholic priest
Father Mark Croker
as he ministers from Bombala
through to the mountains

--

for each other
that we may be
salt and light
in this community

--

People everywhere
who are living
through war or disasters
of every kind.

5 March 2023 The Holy Communion - FIRST ORDER

HYMN TIS 201 King of Glory

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

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

Sentence of Scripture

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. John 3.16

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**

Two Great Commandments

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.

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and one another: call forth our penitence and acts of love, and strengthen us to face our mortality, so that we may look with confidence for your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Genesis 12.1-4a

¹ The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. ² 'I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.' ⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran.

Psalms 121

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills: but where shall I find help?
² My help comes from the Lord: who has made heaven and earth.
³ He will not suffer your foot to stumble: and he who watches over you will not sleep.
⁴ Be sure he who has charge of Israel: will neither slumber nor sleep.
⁵ The Lord himself is your keeper: the Lord is your defence upon your right hand;
⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day: nor shall the moon by night.
⁷ The Lord will defend you from all evil: it is he who will guard your life.
⁸ The Lord will defend your going out and your coming in: from this time forward for evermore.

Romans 4.1-5; 4.13-17

¹ What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about – but not before God. ³ What does Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' ⁴ Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. ¹³ It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴ For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵ because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring – not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷ As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed – the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

John 3.1-21

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

³ Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

⁴ "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

⁵ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

⁹ "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

Sermon

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.

THE PRAYERS

Let us pray for all people, and for the Church throughout the world.

Generous God, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we 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 forever. Amen.

PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER

Exhortation

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we who would come to the holy communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ must consider how St Paul exhorts us to examine ourselves before presuming to eat of that bread and drink of that cup.

For the benefit is great, if with a penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy sacrament. We then spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood; we dwell in Christ and he in us; we are one with Christ and Christ with us. Yet also the danger is great if we receive the bread and cup unworthily. Judge yourselves therefore, that you be not judged of the Lord.

Repent truly of your sins, having a steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour. Amend your lives and love your neighbour. Above all, give hearty thanks to God for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, truly God and truly human, who humbled himself to death on the cross for us sinners, that he might make us children of God, and raise us to eternal life.

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking in his holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to strengthen and comfort you. But first, let us make a humble confession of our sins to almighty God.

Invitation to Confession

Compassion and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God, though we have rebelled and wandered far off. Let us then ask for mercy, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Confession

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all people, we acknowledge with shame the sins we have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against your divine majesty, provoking most justly your wrath and indignation against us.

We earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for all our misdoings.

Have mercy on us, most merciful Father. For your Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake forgive us all that is past, and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please you in newness of life, to the honour and glory of your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Absolution.

Almighty God our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy has promised forgiveness of sins to all who with hearty repentance and true faith turn to him: have mercy on you; pardon and deliver you from all your sins; confirm and strengthen you in all goodness; and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Hear the words of assurance for those who truly turn to Christ.

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

I Tim 1:15

Hymn TIS 25 As pant the Hart

THE LORD'S SUPPER

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.**

It is indeed right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, Lord, Mighty Creator, and Eternal God.

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

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Glory to you, O Lord most high.

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.

All glory to you, our heavenly Father, for in your tender mercy you gave your only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death on the cross for our redemption: who made there, by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and instituted, and in his holy gospel commanded us to continue, a perpetual memory of his precious death until his coming again.

Hear us, merciful Father, we humbly pray, and grant that we who receive these gifts of your creation, this bread and this wine, according to your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed body and blood; who on the night he was betrayed 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 which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' Likewise, after supper he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, 'Drink from this, all of you; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' **Amen**

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life; take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life; drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

AFTER COMMUNION

Lord and heavenly Father, we your humble servants entirely desire your fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and to grant that, by the merits and death of your Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and your whole Church may receive forgiveness of our sins and all other benefits of his passion.

And here we offer and present to you, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice, humbly beseeching you that all we who are partakers of this holy communion may be fulfilled with your grace and heavenly benediction.

And although we are unworthy, through our many sins, to offer you any sacrifice, yet we pray that you will accept this, our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory are yours, Father, world without end.

Hymn TIS 562 I'm not Ashamed

Blessing

Christ our Saviour draw you to himself, that you may find in him crucified a sure ground for faith, a firm support for hope, and the assurance of sin forgiven; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.



Today our gospel reading comes from John as this is a crucial passage for us to understand what our faith entails, especially appropriate during Lent. Nicodemus seeks out Jesus and he has some nice things to say to Jesus, you would think all is wholesome until you notice that he is coming under the cover of darkness, so that his actions are not seen. Nicodemus calls him Rabbi, an address that acknowledges Jesus as teacher; and he acknowledges that Jesus has come from God; and he speaks for his community ('we know') but this is not unambiguous because his insights into Jesus is based on Jesus' signs, not on personal knowledge.

Jesus does not respond to the compliments but goes immediately to what Nicodemus needs to hear. The Greek word we have translated 'born again' has two meanings; it means to be 'born again' but it also means to be born 'from above' there is no English equivalent so our translators have to choose one or the other, which means we miss some of the nuances of this passage. We and Nicodemus are meant to hear both meanings but he focuses only on the 'born again' and protests that this is impossible.



Jesus words speak of a radical new birth, generated from above. Throughout this passage Jesus continues to try to explain what he means but Nicodemus continues to be impervious. His fixed idea of what is possible intrude on the conversation and prevent him from understanding Jesus' words.

The word translated 'wind' or 'spirit' is in fact the same word. This perfectly captures what Jesus is trying to say: the wind/spirit blows where it will; humans can detect its presence but cannot know its exact movement; a mystery beyond human knowledge or control. It is humbling for Nicodemus to be told this as he is a respected and senior teacher.



Moses lifted up the bronze snake in the wilderness as a cure for snake bite, which is still used as a symbol of healing today. That particular bronze snake was kept in the Tabernacle until it was discovered much later that people were worshipping it and it was destroyed. A contemporary of Jesus is noted for emphasising that it wasn't the bronze snake itself that had saved the Israelites but the saving power of God.

The bronze snake is a prophetic image pointing to the death of Jesus. Moses put the snake on a pole, and lifted it up so that the people could see it and be cured; just as the son of man was lifted up so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. The only cure for our failings is looking at the son of man and believing in him.



The evil which was and is in the world, deep rooted within us took its full force on Jesus. When we look at him lifted up on the cross what we are looking at is the result of the evil in which we are all stuck, and we are seeing what God has done about it. The important word in the analogy of the snake and Jesus is 'lifted up' because that it is yet another double meaning, although in this case it works in English as well. When something is 'lifted up' it can simply be that it is picked up, moved to a higher position or it can mean that it is exalted, promoted, and revered. This double meaning implies that the physical act of lifting up was also a moment of exaltation.

Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and ascension are one continuous event so the moment of lifting up is the beginning of the final exaltation of our Lord. We are seeing the Love of God poured out through his son, we are seeing what God's own love looks like. This was no messy accident; it wasn't God letting the worst happen to someone else. This is God himself, giving himself, in the person of his son to save us under the weight of the world's evil. The Father suffered with the son. The cross is the ultimate ladder set up between heaven and earth.



Evil does not disappear in that instant, There is still evil lurking within each of us. For healing to take place we must be involved in the process. This does not mean we have to try harder to be good. All we can do, just as all the Israelites could do is to look and trust: to look at Jesus, to see in him the full display of God's saving love and to trust and follow him.

God sent/allowed his son to go, into the world in love in order to save the world, not condemn it. Yet the very presence of Jesus, as incarnate word, in the world confronts the world the world with a decision, to believe or not to believe and making that decision is the moment of judgement. If one believes, one is saved; if one does not believe one condemns oneself unwittingly.



Here opens the great divide, described in this passage as light and darkness. Believing in Jesus means coming to the light, the light of God's new creation. Not believing means remaining in the darkness. The darkness must be condemned, not because it offends some arbitrary rules that God made up and certainly not because of some division between the created world and the spiritual world. It is condemned because it is destroying and defacing the world and all the good that God has made and preventing people coming into God new Kingdom, eternal life.

The point of the whole story is that noone needs to be condemned. The snake doesn't have to kill you. God's action in the crucifixion of Jesus has planted a sign in the middle of history. And the sign says believe and live, be born again.



In Jesus' time what mattered was being born into the right family, the Jews believed that unless you were a descendant of Abraham you were not of the chosen race. Jesus is saying, God is starting a new family in which ordinary birth is not enough. The new birth comes from above, from God. This new birth which brings you into the visible community of Jesus's followers and gives you the new life of the spirit welling up like a spring of water inside you, is now required for membership in God's kingdom. In fact without that new birth you cannot even see the kingdom of God, let alone join it.



When we were born, we emerged from our mother's womb and there was much rejoicing, no one ever questioned that we were actually born, they could see it. Occasionally the authorities insisted on proof of when and where and the names of our parents by asking for our birth certificates but no one questioned our birth. The important thing for all concerned was that we were born and could now grow and learn and become a toddler, a child, a teenager and then an adult. Yes, babies are cute but also for our parents, our families and everyone who loved us the important thing was our ability to grow, the birth was just the beginning.



Some Christians will ask others if they have been 'born again' but not care in the slightest what has happened since. As if the moment of conversion, or the process which led to it, is the centre of what it means to be a Christian, as though all that God wanted was simply to give people a wonderful spiritual encounter, a mountain top experience, to be remembered ever afterwards with a warm glow.

It doesn't matter whether you were born into a Christian family, were taken to Sunday school and church and slowly came to your own faith or whether you came to a sudden, huge event, with dramatic build up, a moment of decision and then tidal waves of relief, joy, forgiveness and love, or something in between; what matters is that you grew in your faith and love and are now no longer a babe in Christ.



Where there is spiritual life it's more important to feed and nurture it than to spend time thinking about what happened at the time of birth, conversion. Are you a fully fledged disciple in your own right, following Jesus and making mature decisions based on faith and scripture? Spiritual maturity is not measured by our mountain tops, it is measured by our obedience and persistence in the valleys. It is not those moments of great joy which mark our spiritual journey it is our willingness to follow the light even when it is only a glimmer but we know it shows us the way. Growth comes in the valleys. No matter how hard or mundane life our life is, we grow in him.