

Cooma Anglican 22 Oct 2023

## Hymn 153 - God is Love, Let Heaven Adore Him

### Greeting

Blessed be God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you. **And also with you**

### Sentence

'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.'

### Sentence of the Day

Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. Mat 22:21

### 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

Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ you have revealed your glory among the nations: grant that your church throughout the world may persevere with steadfast faith in proclaiming the cross to be the way that leads to life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the holy spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen

### Exodus 33:12-23

12 Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' 13 If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." 14 The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." 15 Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. 16 How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" 17 And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." 18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." 19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." 21 Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. 22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

### Psalm 99

**1 The Lord is king, let the nations tremble:**

**he is enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake.**

2 The Lord is great in Zion:

he is high above all nations.

**3 Let them praise your great and terrible name:**

**for holy is the Lord.**

4 The Mighty One is king and loves justice:

you have established equity,

you have dealt righteousness and justice in Jacob.

**5 O exalt the Lord our God:**

**and bow down before his footstool, for he is holy.**

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests,

and Samuel among those who call upon his name:

they called to the Lord and he answered.

**7 He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud:  
they kept to his teachings and the law that he gave them.**

8 You answered them, O Lord our God:  
you were a forgiving God to them  
and pardoned their wrongdoing.

**9 O exalt the Lord our God:  
and bow down towards his holy hill,  
for the Lord our God is holy.**

### **1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

1 Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you.

2 We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. 3 We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead —Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

### **Matthew 22:15-33**

15 Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. 16 They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. 17 Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?" 18 But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? 19 Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, 20 and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" 21 "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." 22 When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

23 That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. 24 "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for him. 25 Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. 26 The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. 27 Finally, the woman died. 28 Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?" 29 Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. 30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. 31 But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, 32 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." 33 When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

## **Sermon**

### **The Apostle's 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.**

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

### Prayers

Let us pray for the world and the church.

**Response** Jesus, friend of the helpless, 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.**

Jesus said, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. John 6:35

### Prayer of Approach [Let us pray.]

**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.**

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 597 Master, speak, thy servant heareth

### Offering

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

### 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**

It is right to praise you, faithful God, always and everywhere, for with your only begotten Son and life-giving Spirit you are the one true God from everlasting to everlasting. At the dawn of time you wrought from nothing a universe of beauty and splendour, bringing light from darkness and order from chaos. You formed us, male and female, in your image, and endowed us with creative power. We turned away from you but you did not abandon us. You called us by name and searched us out, making a covenant of mercy, giving the law, and teaching justice by the prophets. And so we praise you, joining with your faithful people of every time and place, singing the eternal song:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

When the fullness of time was come, you sent your Son to be born of Mary. Bright image of your glory, he learnt obedience to you in all things, even to death on a cross, breaking the power of evil, freeing us from sin, and putting death to flight. You raised him from death, exulting him to glory, and the new day dawned. On the night he was betrayed, your Son Jesus Christ shared food with his friends his companions on the way. While at table he took bread, blessed, and broke it, and giving it to them, said "Take, eat, this is my body.'

He took a cup of wine, and, giving thanks, he gave it to them, and said, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Do this in remembrance of me.'

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Therefore, living God, as we obey his command, we remember his life of obedience to you, his suffering and death, his resurrection and exaltation, and his promise to be with us for ever. With this bread and this cup, we celebrate his saving death until he comes.

Accept, we pray, our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and send your Holy Spirit upon us and our celebration that all who eat and drink at this table may be strengthened by Christ's body and blood to serve you in the world. As one body and one holy people, may we proclaim the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom, with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory is yours, eternal God, now and for ever.

Amen.

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

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 Offering**

**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.

### **Prayer 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.**

### **Notices**

**Hymn 609 May the mind of Christ my Saviour**

### **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 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

As you know, we usually have four readings every Sunday, one from the Old Testament, one from the Psalms, one from the New Testament, and one from the gospels. Often the sermon is based on the gospel reading, but it doesn't have to be, and today I thought I'd start a series of sermons based on the apostle Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. The set New Testament readings for the next five weeks are from 1 Thessalonians, so this works well. There will be 5 sermons in total, and I will put copies of them on our website in case you want to catch up on one you miss, and the congregations that don't meet every Sunday.

Before I start looking at the passage, it is helpful to put this letter in its context. The apostle Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians to the church that God established in Thessalonica through Paul in Acts 17.

Acts 17 says that when Paul and his companions came to Thessalonica, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah," he said. 4 Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

But it wasn't all smooth sailing. Some Jews were jealous, rounded up some bad characters, formed a mob and started a riot and Paul had to flee to Berea, but the Thessalonians chased him there. Sometime later, Paul wrote the letter to them to encourage the new believers in the faith, and to encourage us, some 1950 or so years later.

Today's reading from 1 Thes 1 gives us a bit of a life cycle of one of the early generations of Christians, the first Christians at the first century Greek village of Thessalonica, which is now modern day Thessaloniki.

In our passage, Paul talks about 5 different stages in the life cycle of this first generation of Thessalonian Christians.

Your Christian story will be slightly different, but I believe 1 Thessalonians 1 gives us a model for every Christian generation, so let's look at the stages as Paul says happened to the Thessalonians

**The first stage**, Paul says in verse 4, is that **God chose them**. This is the first stage and we know it didn't just happen when Paul visited Thessalonika. In Ephesians 1:4 Paul says *<sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.*

This is of course the first step for every Christian, as it was for the Thessalonians, as it was for us. God chose every Christian long before they were born. This shows that our salvation is entirely reliant on God's grace, and nothing that we do for ourselves. It is a great privilege and blessing to be chosen by God, as we totally deserve his rejection, and so we should respond the way the Thessalonians did, welcoming the message and seeking to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ, and Paul, our model of Christian living, as we will come to in a moment.

For **the next stage**, we skip the next few years from when God chooses them to when **the Gospel comes to the soon-to-be-Christian**. Paul says it came, not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. For the Thessalonians, it happened in the brief period when Paul lived among them, and later when Timothy ministered to them. Acts 17 talks about this stage, and I encourage you to read Acts 17 during the week to get a better background to this letter. Nowadays evangelists do not usually move into a soon-to-be Christian's home like Paul did, but there is usually a period where the new Christian sees how other Christians, or particularly whoever shared the gospel with them, lives. It is really helpful for a new Christian to get to experience something of the Christian life, and particularly to have it modelled for them as Paul and Timothy did for the fledgling church in Thessalonica. In many cases, the power of the Holy Spirit really works in the heart and mind of new Christian, or even the-soon-to-be believer primarily through that other Christians modelling their lives.

**The next step** represents a huge step in the life of a new Christian. In verse 6 it says **the Thessalonians welcomed the message** with joy given by the Holy Spirit. Nowadays, we would probably call this the point of conversion, where they accept the gospel of Jesus in their hearts and turn to Christ, or as we would say, they become Christians. If you like, welcoming the gospel was a status change in their lives, when they changed their citizenship from this earth to that of heaven, when they turned from being God's enemies, from rejecting him to become Christians. This should make us think back to when we became Christians, when we accepted the message of the gospel. While there are certain common elements always present when anyone becomes a Christian: hearing the gospel, being convicted of sin, repenting and accepting Jesus as Lord of your life, there may be other elements that are different in each situation. Many Christians, like me, were taught the gospel as children in Christian families, and don't remember a specific conversion experience. Others were probably more like the Thessalonians who heard the gospel and became Christians in the short time that Paul was with them.

Another difference between my experience and that of the Thessalonians' was that theirs, or at least some of theirs, came in the midst of severe suffering. Thankfully for us in 21st century Cooma this is more the exception than the rule. However, even today, in many countries, suffering and persecution is common for Christians, whether early in their Christian lives, or later as they mature in the faith. Even in the West, it seems that the Devil pays particular attention to new Christians. He often uses suffering and persecution, or perhaps simple inconvenience and social awkwardness to discourage people from turning to Christ, or drag them away once they have received the message. Despite this, Paul says that although the Thessalonians accepted the message during great affliction, they accepted it with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

After welcoming the message, and the change in citizenship before God that that brought, Paul says **the fourth stage** came when **the Thessalonians turned from idols to serve true and living God, and to wait for Jesus return**. In effect, the change of citizenship and status now brought about a change in behaviour. Paul refers to this as serving the true and living God, and in effect what has happened is that the Thessalonians were now living for God, not themselves or their own base passions.

This is really the true value of the experience the Thessalonians had of Paul's life, that they were able to learn from him and directly experience how Christians live, their values, their priorities and their lifestyle. This change in behaviour obviously had to reflect their change in citizenship and status, and so for the Thessalonians this meant turning away from the idols that had held their allegiances in the past. As the Thessalonians no longer lived for idols but turned to serve the true and living God, so every Christian must turn from their idols to God. For the Thessalonians, these idols would have been religious statues that they physically worshipped and made offerings to, but for us, our idols are probably different, but they still claiming our allegiance and our time and effort. Our idols might be money, our jobs, our status, or even political or social influence or power. Christians put all these aside for the one status that counts, that of being saved by the precious blood of Jesus.

This brings the Thessalonians, and us, to **the last stage**. It is surprisingly similar to Stage 2, but the tables are turned. You will remember that in stage 2, the Thessalonians imitated Jesus and Paul, but now they are the model, and now Macedonians, Archaians, and, according to Paul, people from everywhere are imitating them. In verse 7 it says they became a model to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia, and their faith is known everywhere. Even more so, he says their faith has reported back to him, the reception they gave Paul and, as I've mentioned earlier, how they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,<sup>10</sup> and to wait for his Son from heaven.

This is the truly amazing bit, and the way the Christians generations develop. The chances are that someone in a church, perhaps Thessalonica, or perhaps another of the churches that Paul started, heard and accepted the gospel from Paul, and imitated the model of Christian living that he demonstrated, which was in turn heard, and accepted, modeled and imitated down the track by someone who heard, accepted, modelled and imitated, and so on through

the generations, until someone shared the gospel with you and you accepted it, and you imitated the life they modelled, and consequently you now are rescued from the coming wrath.

The challenge therefore is whether you will break the chain of which you are ultimately a link. Self-evidently, the chain has not been broken prior to you. Do you share that gospel as you have heard the gospel? Do you demonstrate Christian living to others so they can imitate you, and turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and as you imitate the Christian life that demonstrated to you? <sup>10</sup> Do you wait for Jesus, God's son from heaven, who rescues us from the coming wrath, as the Thessalonians did some 2000 years ago, and every generation since, and consequently every subsequent Christian generation until Jesus does return and calls us home?

Will you maintain this chain?