

**SUNDAY 29 October**

**Hymn 132 -Holy Holy Holy**

**Holy holy holy Lord God Almighty  
Early in the morning to you our praise shall be;  
Holy holy holy Merciful and mighty  
God in three persons Blessed Trinity**

**Holy holy holy All the saints adore you  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before you,  
God everlasting through eternity**

**Holy holy holy Though the darkness hide you  
Though the sinful human eye your glory may not see  
You alone are holy There is none beside you  
Perfect in power In love and purity**

**Holy holy holy Lord God Almighty  
All your works shall praise your name In earth and sky and sea  
Holy holy holy Merciful and mighty  
God in three persons Blessed Trinity**

**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**

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Matthew 22:37-40

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

**Prayer of Preparation**

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Prayer of the Day**

O God, whose Son has taught us that love is the fulfillment of your law: stir up within us the fire of your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts your greatest gift of love, so that we may love you with our whole being, and our neighbours as ourselves; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

**The Ministry of the Word**

**Deuteronomy 34.1-12**

34 Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the Lord showed him the whole land—from Gilead to Dan, 2 all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea, 3 the

Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar. 4 Then the Lord said to him, "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it." 5 And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said. 6 He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is.

7 Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. 8 The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over.

9 Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the Lord had commanded Moses. 10 Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, 11 who did all those signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. 12 For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

### **Psalm 90.1-6, 13-17**

1 Lord, you have been our refuge: from one generation to another.

**2 Before the mountains were born or the earth and the world were brought to be: from eternity to eternity you are God.**

3 You turn us back into dust: saying Return to dust, O children of Adam

**4 For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday passing: or like one watch of the night.**

5 You cut them short like a dream: like the fresh grass of the morning,

**6 In the morning it is green and flourishes: at evening it is withered and dried up.**

13 Relent, O Lord; how long will you be angry?: take pity on your servants.

**14 O satisfy us early with your mercy: that all our days we may rejoice and sing**

15 Give us joy for all the days you have afflicted us: For the years we have suffered adversity.

**16 Show your servants your work: And let their children see your glory.**

**17 May the gracious favour of the Lord our God be upon us: Prosper the work of our hands!**

### **1 Thessalonians 2.1-16**

2 <sup>1</sup>You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results. <sup>2</sup>We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. <sup>3</sup>For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. <sup>4</sup>On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. <sup>5</sup>You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. <sup>6</sup>We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. <sup>7</sup>Instead, we were like young children among you.

Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, <sup>8</sup>so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. <sup>9</sup>Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. <sup>10</sup>You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. <sup>11</sup>For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, <sup>12</sup>encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe. 14 For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews 15 who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to everyone 16 in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.

### **Matthew 22.34-46**

34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?" "The son of David," they replied. 43 He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'? For he says, 44 " 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet." ' 45 If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?" 46 No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

### **Sermon 1 Thessalonians 2**

#### **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.**

#### **Sentences of Scripture**

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**

**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 121 God Himself is present**

**God Himself is present: Let us now adore Him As with awe come before Him.**

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

**Him we know. Him we name**

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

**O majestic Being, I would praise you duly and my service render to you  
In the selfsame spirit as the holy angels, ever standing in your presence.  
Grant me now So to strive  
evermore to please you dearest God, in all things.**

**Let your glorious light, Lord, permeating all things, reach my face and eyes to touch them;  
as the tender flowers open out their petals, to the sun their hearts unfolding,  
so may I, calm in joy,  
hold your rays from heaven, power within me working.**

**Lord, make me your dwelling let my heart and spirit be for you an earthly temple:  
come, Immediate Being, my whole life illumine, so I'll always praise and love you,  
so where'er, I may be  
there I may perceive you, ever bow before you.**

### **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.**

### **The Thanksgiving**

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, it is our duty, our joy and our salvation, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ your only Son our Lord.

For he is the true high priest, who has freed us from our sins and made us a royal priesthood to serve you, our God and Father. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

**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.**

Holy and gracious God, all creation rightly gives you praise. All life, all holiness, comes from you through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, whom you sent to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

Hear us, merciful Lord; through Christ accept our sacrifice of praise; and, by the power of your Word and Holy Spirit, sanctify this bread and wine, that we who share in this holy sacrament may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

Who, when his hour had come, on the night before he went up to the cross to make full atonement for the sins of the whole world, offering once for all his one sacrifice of himself, took bread and gave 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.'

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:  
**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Therefore, in obedience to his command, we commemorate and celebrate his saving passion and death, his mighty resurrection and ascension into heaven and we eagerly await his coming again in glory. We thank you that by your grace alone you have accepted us in Christ; and here we offer you a spiritual sacrifice, holy and acceptable in your sight.

Through Christ, receive this our duty and service, and grant that we who eat and drink these holy gifts may we, by your Holy Spirit, be one body in Christ, and serve you in unity and peace.

In your grace and mercy, bring us to the joy of your eternal kingdom with all the company of the redeemed. May we praise you in union with them, and give you glory through your Son, Jesus Christ. Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father eternal, in songs of never-ending praise:

**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.

The Lord's Supper is open to all who love the Lord.  
Grape juice is available. Please come to the table maintaining social distancing

Living God, in this holy meal you fill us with new hope. May the power of your love, which we have known in word and sacrament, continue your saving work among us, give us courage for our pilgrimage, and bring us to the joys you promise.

**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.**

### **Hymn 125 You Servants of God**

**You servants of God,  
your Master proclaim,  
and publish abroad  
his wonderful name;  
the name all-victorious  
of Jesus extol;  
his kingdom is glorious,  
and rules over all.**

**Our God rules on high,  
almighty to save;  
and still he is nigh,  
his presence we have;  
the great congregation  
his triumph shall sing,  
ascribing salvation  
to Jesus our king.**

**Salvation to God,  
who sits on the throne!  
let all cry aloud,  
and honour the Son:  
the praises of Jesus  
the angels proclaim,  
fall down on their faces,  
and worship the Lamb.**

**Then let us adore,  
and give him his right,  
all glory and power,  
all wisdom and might,  
all honour and blessing,  
with angels above,  
and thanks never-ceasing,  
and infinite love.**

### **Dismissal**

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.**

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

## Sermon 1 Thessalonians 2

### Introduction

One of the challenges of open plan offices, our ordinary home life and generally in modern society, is that you are subjected to one side of other people's phone calls. Unfortunately, with the prevalence of mobile phones, we also have to suffer these in public places and even public transport whether we mind or not.

Overhearing these phone calls can be really annoying and frustrating because we can't hear the other side of the conversation. Reading Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians is a bit like listening to one side of a phone call. It is obvious that Paul has been copping some flak, some criticism, and he is responding to this criticism in his letter, but we can't hear the other side of the conversation.

Furthermore, Paul doesn't specifically identify the criticisms, so the best we can do is to infer them from his responses.

From my reading, there were probably quite a few different criticisms, but for the purposes of this sermon, I think they can be grouped into to three main issues that his opponents seem to be bringing up:

1. His motivation is wrong,
2. Methods were wrong,
3. his entire visit was Meaningless as it didn't achieve anything

For ease of memory, they are three ms, motivation, method and meaninglessness.

So let's look at each of these accusations and see what we can learn.

#### **His motivation is wrong**

One of the accusations that Paul seems to be getting is that His motivation is all wrong. But he says that his appeal, his message does not spring from error or impure motives. Paul is adamant that he is only seeking to please God, not people. Notice the language that Paul uses. He is not even drawing attention to himself. Even though he was most likely the primary speaker, he constantly uses the third person plural - that is, he doesn't say "I did this" or "I said that", but it is always we, and not only that, but he gives the credit to God, as in verse 2, where he says "with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel."

He also says he is not motivated by greed, and has not figuratively put on a mask (or literally a cloak) to cover up greed. We can all be good at hiding our true motivations, and to be honest, we don't often have completely pure, altruistic motivations. I have to keep asking myself whether I am doing something because I like the respect or the praise I get, or am I really doing it for other people's benefit. I often resolve this dilemma by recognising that the things I am doing and am worried about are worthwhile

whatever the motivation, but Paul doesn't seem to have this concern - he is absolutely convinced that he is not preaching the gospel out of greed, and given that he is sharing his life with the Thessalonians and even living among them, he would have no way to hide any greed, even if he had any.

So, it seems that Paul is not even worried about what the Thessalonians thought of him, how clever, how well spoken, how altruistic he is. The way the Thessalonians judge him isn't what drives Paul, and he certainly is not looking for their praise. He is only worried about what God thinks of him. As he says, God is his judge, only God tests his heart. He knows in his heart that he has been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. As he writes this he's probably thinking back to when he first met the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul was probably remembering how he was originally commissioned to preach the gospel, and Jesus commissioned him to this work despite the fact that he had been actually persecuting Christians up to that point, and yet, he was still approved by God for the gospel work he was to do.

It also seems people are claiming Paul and his team aren't motivated by a real concern for the Thessalonians, but this obviously isn't so. Just listen to the language he uses about them. His team was like a nursing mother caring for her children, they cared for them, they loved them so much, they were delighted to share with them not only the gospel of God but their lives as well, they worked night and day in order not to be a burden while they preached the gospel of God. They dealt with each of them as a father deals with his own children,<sup>12</sup> encouraging, comforting and urging them. Later on Paul calls them "brothers and sisters", and describes being separated from them for a short time (in person, not in thought) as being orphaned. Out of their intense longing they made every effort to see them, again and again. Paul ends the chapter with "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?<sup>20</sup> Indeed, you are our glory and joy." Are these the words of someone who does not care for the Thessalonians? No indeed, despite any accusations that were going around, Paul was deeply motivated by a tender love and concern for the Thessalonians, even to his own danger and worldly detriment.

### **His methods are wrong.**

The second accusation was that his methods were wrong, or at least not worthy of the perfectly good God that Paul and his team was proclaiming.

He says they did not use the common rhetorical devices of his time that were cleverly devised to sway an audience to your way of thinking. I am sure that everyone here this morning is so incredibly clever that they could not possibly be swayed by flattery, and would notice immediately if I gave the slightest hint of it, but Paul doesn't even try.

Paul could have misled the Thessalonians, tricked them by appearing to be something he wasn't, figuratively putting on a mask or cloak to hide his true motivation, as I mentioned earlier. But that is not how Paul worked, as that is the way Satan works. Another name for Satan, who Paul mentions later in the chapter is The Deceiver, while



God is the God of holiness, righteousness and blamelessness. It would have been completely wrong for Paul and his team to use Satan's methods of deceit, but, on the contrary, he spoke as approved by the God of truth. The Thessalonians witnessed, as did God, how holy, righteous and blameless Paul and his team were among them, and the complete appropriateness of their methods, despite the accusations that were flying around.

### **Meaningless**

And so we come to the last accusation I will talk about this morning, which was actually the first one Paul mentioned in this passage. The passage started with Paul defending against the accusation that Paul hadn't really achieved much in the short time that he was in Thessalonica. On the one hand, from a practical perspective, it wouldn't have been surprising if Paul hadn't been able to achieve much. He was only there a short time and was persecuted for most of that time and even before he got there while in Philippi. However, despite this persecution, Paul says the Thessalonians know that he had achieved a lot, or at least they would know if they looked at what had happened from the right perspective.

From a human perspective, Paul may not have achieved much. There was no mega church with an impressive church building with thousands attending every week and a multi million dollar budget. No, there were none of those things. But Paul says they had results where it was important. And where is it important? Paul says that despite strong opposition, that the gospel was preached. This is the result that God wants, that the gospel is preached. This is true worship of God, the gospel being preached. This is the proclamation of the greatness of God - that the gospel of God's saving grace through the death and resurrection of his one and only son Jesus Christ, the only result that counts.

It is often said that God doesn't require results, only faithfulness. Paul is saying here that faithfully preaching the gospel is the result that he and his team achieved.

Now, perhaps people scorn at our little congregation at Cooma, and perhaps even you question the results of our 146 years of ministry here, meeting month after month with less than a dozen in the pews. But in Paul's eyes, and I am convinced, in God's eyes, the results are the faithful preaching of the gospel that happens here whenever we meet, and whenever you share your faith with your family, your neighbours and the people you come into contact with every day. These are the eternally valuable results that God wants from us, and with his strength, we deliver.

However, even though God does not require results beyond faithful proclamation of his gospel, there were bucket loads of further results in Thessalonica. The Thessalonians received the word of God, which they heard from Paul and accepted it as it actually is, the word of God, And that word of God is indeed at work in all the Thessalonians who believe. For they became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus.

Just like us some 2000 years later, in Cooma where the gospel is faithfully preached with the right motive, the right methods, and is never meaningless when people receive it as the word of God, and it is at work in our hearts as we here imitate the church in Thessalonica, as it imitated the churches in Judea, as they imitated Paul and the apostles, as they imitated their and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There will always be accusations that our motivations, our methods are wrong and that our gospel is meaningless in worldly terms, but as Paul reminds us, faithfully proclaiming the gospel is the result that really counts, so let us be encouraged to keep up proclaiming the gospel, regardless of any accusations that come our way.