

Sunday 21 January 2024 Epiphany 3
10am Cooma, 4pm Adaminaby

Hymn - O for a closer walk with God

O for a closer walk with God,
a calm and heavenly frame,
a light to shine upon the road
that leads me to the Lamb.

Where is the blessedness I knew
when first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
of Jesus and his word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
how sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
the world can never fill.

Return, O holy dove, return,
sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
and drove thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known,
whate'er that idol be,
help me to tear it from thy throne
and worship only thee.

So shall my walk be close with God,
calm and serene my frame;
so purer light shall mark the road
that leads me to the Lamb.

The Grace

of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you.
And also with you.

'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.

Sentence of the Day

On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Mark 2:17

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

Lord God of the nations

You have revealed your will to your people and promised us your saving help; help us to hear and do what you command, that the darkness may be overcome by the power of your light; through Jesus Christ,, our Lord, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Deuteronomy 23:21-25

21 If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. 22 But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. 23 Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the LORD your God with your own mouth. 24 If you enter your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket. 25 If you enter your neighbor's grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to their standing grain.

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

Psalm 62:5-12

5 Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.

6 Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

7 My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

8 Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

9 Surely the lowborn are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie. If weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath.

10 Do not trust in extortion or put vain hope in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

11 One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: "Power belongs to you, God,

12 and with you, Lord, is unfailing love"; and, "You reward everyone according to what they have done."

Colossians 2:16-19

16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. 18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. 19 They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

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

Mark 2:13-3:6

13 Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. 14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him. 15 While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?" 19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. 20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. 21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."

23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" 25 He

answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26 In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." 27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

1 Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2 Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." 4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. 5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

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

Sermon

Question Time

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 of the People

Let us pray for the world and the church

Response: Christ Jesus, intercede for us, and in your mercy. **Hear our 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.

Scripture Sentence

Jesus said: A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. John 13.34

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 - A new commandment

**A new commandment I give unto you,
that you love one another as I have loved you,
that you love one another as I have loved you.**

**By this will others know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another;
by this will others know that you are my disciples: if you have love one for another.**
[Repeat]

Thanksgiving for Offering

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

The Great 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.**
All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty Creator, everliving God.
We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us. By his death on the cross, he offered the one true sacrifice for sin, and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.
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.**
Merciful God, we thank you for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine, and we pray that by your Word and Holy Spirit, we who eat and drink them may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.
On the night he was betrayed Jesus 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 given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'
After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples, saying, Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.
Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded: proclaiming his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming again, we celebrate, with this bread and this cup, his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Renew us by your Holy Spirit, unite us in the body of your Son and bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, and in whom, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father, in songs of never-ending praise:
Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

The Holy Communion

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 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.

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. Amen

Notices

Hymn - Take my life, and let it be

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.

Take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of thy love.

Take my feet, and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing always, only, for my King.

Take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold, nothing, Lord, would I withhold.

Take my intellect, and use
every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart, it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love: my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure-store.

Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

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

Introduction

Have you ever thought about how well you keep the commandments in the Bible?

Jewish scholars claim there are 613 commandments in the Old Testament and I found a web page which claims that there are 1050 commandments in the New Testament. Even if those numbers are not accurate, there is no way I could remember them, and so there is no way I could honestly tell you that I'm keeping all of them.

I have found Christians have three different responses to the laws in the Bible:

1. Some Christians think that all God's laws are good laws, and so we should make every effort to keep them all - all 1663 of them.
2. Some Christians think that the only laws we need to worry about are the two great commandments in Mark 12: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.* and *'Love your neighbor as yourself,* or perhaps the new command in John 13:34 *Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.* ³⁵ *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples"*
3. A third group of Christians think that we don't have to worry about any commandments at all in the Bible, provided we repent and are forgiven.

I think there is some truth in each of these points of view, and so today, I want to look at how Jesus responds to law keeping in general in our passage this morning, as well as two examples of Old Testament laws, fasting and keeping the Sabbath.

Firstly, law keeping in general.

Mark 2:13-17 - sinners and tax collectors

In verses 13 through 17, Jesus meets a tax collector by the name of Levi, and goes to his place for a meal. Other tax collectors and sinners are also there.

Now, there is nothing inherently sinful about working for the tax department, but the tax collectors of Jesus's day certainly did not have a good reputation. The common feeling was that they had sold out to the Roman invaders, and were overcharging taxes in order to line their own pockets. In other words, disobeying number 8 of the 10 commandments - Do not steal.

Our particular tax collector, Levi, also seemed to have an inordinate number of what Mark refers to as 'sinners' at his house for dinner. These people were likely people who, although Jews, had no regard for Jewish ritual law, like the 10 commandments, or for attending the synagogue or the temple. We aren't told if there were specific laws that they had broken, but even Jesus doesn't have any qualms about calling them sinners.

The thing that upset the Pharisees was that Jesus was sharing a meal with these people. They had the view that they should not eat with Gentiles or sinners because that would make them ritually unclean, and therefore ineligible to go to the temple, Jewish tradition stated: "Let not a man associate with the wicked, not even to bring him to the Torah"

Nevertheless, Jesus did eat with the tax collectors and sinners. When asked why, he said *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* Anyone who is perfectly sinless, if that were possible, wouldn't need the forgiveness that Jesus came to bring. The problem though is that it isn't really possible, because everyone sins to some extent, and therefore needs forgiveness.

Just as today, many people in Jesus's day didn't think they were bad enough to deserve judgment. If you ever ask someone if they would go to heaven if they died tomorrow, the answer is almost invariably that they think they are not as bad as some others, and that their good balances their badness enough to get let in. It is very difficult to convince people like this that they need the forgiveness that Jesus brings to get eternal life. It is much easier when they recognise their sin, and consequently their need for forgiveness. Provided they accept the forgiveness that Jesus offers, their sin certainly does not prevent them gaining eternal life.

On this basis, sinners and tax collectors probably align most closely with the third group I mentioned earlier - that Old Testament laws don't really matter much as they can all be forgiven.

Mark 2:18-22 Fasting

The next section talks about fasting. Fasting doesn't appear to be generally commanded in the Old Testament, but there are a few times Jews fasted for specific purposes. As examples, they fasted in mourning ([Esther 4:3](#)), in response to God's judgment ([Joel 1:14](#)), to appeal to God ([Judges 20:26](#); [1 Samuel 7:5-6](#); [Isaiah 58](#); [Jeremiah 14:11-12](#); [Jonah 3:5](#)), or to accompany a request to God ([Ezra 8:21-23](#)).

At this point in Mark, John the Baptist is in prison, and his followers are fasting. They might have been fasting in mourning or in repentance for Israel's sin and political situation or to ask God to release John, or even because it was one of the four times a year Jews were commanded to fast. However, when asked why his followers were not fasting as well, Jesus says that people do not fast when the bridegroom is present, and He himself is the bridegroom. His disciples don't fast because he is with them.

Further, Jesus gives them the illustration of wine skins.²¹ *"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."*

In those days, before glass and plastic, the most convenient way to store wine was in bags made of leather. You could use them a few times, but they dried out, cracked and would leak, or even explode as you put a new batch of wine in them. Also, if you had a hole in your clothes, you would patch it with a spare piece of material (does anyone patch clothes any more?) The problem was before the synthetic materials we use today, cloth was made from cotton or wool, which shrinks when you wash it the first few times. If new material is used to patch old, it shrinks and tears away, leaving an even bigger hole.

Both of these illustrate the idea of mixing the old with the new. Jesus is saying that the old wineskins or clothes correspond to the way things were done before he came onto the scene, and the new correspond to the new way he is bringing about. Jews had good reason to fast in mourning in response to God's judgment, and to bring appeals and requests to God. However, for Jesus's followers the joy of his arrival amongst them outweighed any mourning, any judgment, any other appeals or requests to God that might otherwise have been appropriate. Jesus is the bridegroom of Isaiah 62:5 (NIV) who rejoices over his bride the Church, and they needed to rejoice in Him.

Obviously circumstances changed in the early church with various trials and struggles making fasting and mourning appropriate again in some situations.

Jesus also warns against fasting as false piety - of people boasting about their fasting to impress people rather than God. In Matthew 6:16 he says: ¹⁶ "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full."

Jesus is saying we should only seek to keep commandments for the right reasons. If we find ourselves only keeping commandments to impress people or for our own benefit at the expense of others, then we should either change our motivation so we are doing it for the right reason or stop trying. In many cases, this means making sure that no one knows whether we keep that commandment or not. That is why all giving to this church is anonymous, not even I know who is giving how much to the work of the gospel.

Sabbath Keeping

The third and final example we are looking at today is keeping the Sabbath.

In our reading today, the Pharisees were upset with Jesus over two things he did on the Sabbath, collecting grain and healing.

Note that in the story of Jesus' disciples collecting grain, the only problem was that they did it on the Sabbath. They could have done exactly the same thing any other day of the week, and no one would have minded. In our Old Testament reading this morning, you are specifically allowed to pick someone else's grain by hand, provided you don't use a sickle, the poor could collect some grain to fill their empty stomachs. The disciples weren't stealing, but they were doing what was considered work, and work wasn't allowed on the Sabbath. The Pharisees had gone to inordinate lengths to define what actions were prohibited or allowed on the Sabbath, and harvesting grain, no matter how little you harvested, was defined as work, and therefore not allowed on the Sabbath.

Nor was healing, unless the person would soon die without it.

In fact, the Pharisees had determined 39 categories of activities that were prohibited on the Sabbath. They decreed that not only should were they forbidden, but also was anything that (1) resembles a prohibited act or could be confused with it, (2) was a habit linked with a prohibited act, or (3) usually leads to performing a prohibited act, such as planning it - but more about those other aspects later.

Jesus didn't argue with either of these assessments. His argument was that there are more important considerations than keeping Sabbath laws.

Firstly, he equated gathering grain on the Sabbath with King David eating consecrated bread in the temple, which only priests were allowed to do. Since it meant King David, the greatest king of Israel, didn't starve, it was ok, as he said feeding the hungry is more important than keeping the Sabbath.

He also equated healing the man's withered hand with giving life, even though it didn't meet the Pharisees' strict definitions. He considered that healing was more important than keeping the Sabbath, and should be done irrespective of the day of the week.

Also, Jesus argued that *The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.*"

The first bit is shown when you look at the Old Testament references to the Sabbath. In every instance, the Sabbath is associated with God providing a blessing, a blessing that in effect negates the need for you to work. The first time the Sabbath was commanded was when God provided the Israelites with manna in the wilderness on their exodus from Egypt. The Israelites were to gather manna for six days, but not on the seventh, the sabbath. God made special provision for this, and provided double the normal amount, and special long lasting manna on the sixth day. Manna collected every other day would go rotten overnight, but that gathered on the sixth day was enough for two days and didn't go off.

Also, in the ten commandments, in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, two reasons are given for the Sabbath commandments. Both associated with God's blessing. In Exodus, God rested after 6 days of creation, when he had done all the work to make this world good, and in Deuteronomy, God did the work of rescuing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, where they had to work making bricks for the Egyptians. In both instances God did the work, and Israel is to remember this by not trying to do it for themselves.

In other words, the Sabbath was made for the benefit of Israel, encouraging them to let God do their work one day a week, and as a side benefit, ensuring the rest that is critical to their physical, mental, social and spiritual health.

IN addition to this, Jesus is yet again asserting his divinity and identity as the Son of Man, God the Son. With the exception of the first seventh day, it is obvious that God's work of maintaining and sustaining his creation does not stop on every Sabbath, otherwise all creation would fall apart. Therefore it must be appropriate that Jesus continue his work of saving creation on the Sabbath. As he puts it here, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, and no one should try to stop him restoring life, or even restoring withered hands on this day, or any other day.

The passage finishes with a subtle dig by the gospel writer at the Pharisees. You will remember that earlier I said that the Pharisees had legislated that doing certain activities, and anything that usually leads to performing a prohibited act, such as planning that act were prohibited in the Sabbath.. And what was the last thing the passage mentions that Pharisees were doing? Mark says *the Pharisees went out, on the Sabbath, and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. On the Sabbath! Jesus might well ask which is lawful on the Sabbath, save life or to kill?*

Conclusion

So, we should ask ourselves what we learn from today's passage..

From the bit about Matthew the tax collector, we learn that sin, when repented and forgiven, doesn't prevent eternal life. If anything, understanding your own sinfulness helps you appreciate your need to seek forgiveness and salvation. Therefore being forgiven is more important than keeping the sabbath, or keeping any other law.

Secondly, there is a time and place for fasting and mourning, but we need to do it for the right reasons. It must not be done to impress others. I know this is pretty vague, but it really does depend on the situation.

Thirdly, Jesus' incarnation, death and resurrection requires a major rethink of Old Testament law. Jesus is God and it is God's law we are talking about. He doesn't change the law on a whim, but he does help us understand the law, and the priority of apparently conflicting laws. In today's reading he has done this by clarifying when fasting is and isn't important and the priority of giving life over

Sabbath rest. Perhaps most importantly, with Levi he had established the priority of forgiveness over law keeping. Ultimately, all humans are sinners, and we all are lost without the forgiveness that Jesus brings by his death in our place, and is available to us all, no matter which and how many laws we break.

There are also lots more the Bible says regarding Old Testament law in particular. We have looked today at the sermon on the mount, for example. In it, Jesus drives Old Testament laws to their highest degree - interpreting "Do not murder" as do not even be angry with people.

There is truth in each of the 3 understandings of the law I mentioned at the start: All God's laws are good laws, loving God and each other has priority, and ultimately repentance and forgiveness are more important than law keeping. This doesn't take away from us the imperative to seek to obey God's command in response to that forgiveness. We need to keep reading our Bibles, communing with our heavenly Father in prayer, and fellowshiping with our Christian sisters and brothers to work out how this best applies in our specific situations.

Let me pray.