

Sunday 10 March 2024 Lent 4 10am Cooma

### Hymn - To God be the Glory

To God be the glory, great things He hath done;  
So loved He the world that he gave us His Son,  
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,  
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.

### Chorus

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice!  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the people rejoice!  
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,  
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,  
To every believer the promise of God;  
The vilest offender who truly believes,  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,  
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;  
But purer, and higher, and greater will be  
Our wonder, our worship, when Jesus we see.

### 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

Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? Mark 8:17-18

### 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

God of Sarah and Abraham,  
long ago you embraced your people in covenant and promised them your blessing.  
Strengthen us in faith, so that, with your followers in every age and every nation, we may proclaim your salvation in Jesus Christ to generations yet unborn in all the world. **Amen.**

### Isaiah 29: 18-31

18 In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. 19 Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of

Israel. 20 The ruthless will vanish, the mockers will disappear, and all who have an eye for evil will be cut down 21 those who with a word make someone out to be guilty, who ensnare the defender in court and with false testimony deprive the innocent of justice.

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

### **Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22**

<sup>1</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

<sup>2</sup> **Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story— those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,**

<sup>3</sup> those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.

<sup>4</sup> **Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle.**

<sup>17</sup> Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.

<sup>18</sup> **They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death.**

<sup>19</sup> Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.

<sup>20</sup> **He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.**

<sup>21</sup> Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind.

<sup>22</sup> **Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.**

### **1 Corinthians 5:6-8**

<sup>6</sup> Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? <sup>7</sup> Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup> Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

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

### **Mark 8:1-26**

<sup>8.1</sup> During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, <sup>2</sup> "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup> If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." <sup>4</sup> His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"

<sup>5</sup> "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied.

<sup>6</sup> He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. <sup>7</sup> They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. <sup>8</sup> The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. <sup>9</sup> About four thousand were present. After he had sent them away, <sup>10</sup> he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

<sup>11</sup> The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. <sup>12</sup> He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it." <sup>13</sup> Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

<sup>14</sup> The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat.

<sup>15</sup> "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."

<sup>16</sup> They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread."

<sup>17</sup> Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?” <sup>18</sup> Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don’t you remember? . When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” “Twelve,” they replied. <sup>20</sup> “And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” They answered, “Seven.” <sup>21</sup> He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”

<sup>22</sup> They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. <sup>23</sup> He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?” <sup>24</sup> He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.” <sup>25</sup> Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. <sup>26</sup> Jesus sent him home, saying, “Don’t even go into the village.”

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

## Sermon - Jesus’s Mission

### 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

Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one, so that your Father who is in heaven may forgive your trespasses. Mark 11:25

### 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 - Fairest Lord Jesus

Fairest Lord Jesus, Lord of all creation,  
Son of God, and Mary's son:  
you will I cherish, you will I honour,  
you are my soul's delight and crown.

Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands  
robed in the greenness and bloom of spring:  
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,  
he makes the saddest heart to sing.

Fair are the flowers, fairer still the children  
in all the freshness of youth arrayed;  
yet is their beauty, fading and fleeting;  
Lord Jesus, yours will never fade.

Fair is the moonlight, fairer still the sunshine,  
fair is the shimmering starry sky:  
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines clearer  
than all the heavenly host on high.

Jesus, all beauty, heavenly and earthly,  
in you is wondrously found to be;  
none can be nearer, fairer or dearer  
than you, my Saviour, are to me.

## 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 - How Great Thou Art

O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made  
I see the stars I hear the mighty thunder  
Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed

### Chorus

Then sings my soul my Saviour God to Thee  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art

When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur  
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze

And when I think that God His Son not sparing  
Sent Him to die I scarce can take it in  
That on the Cross my burden gladly bearing  
He bled and died to take away my sin

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
And take me home what joy shall fill my heart  
Then shall I bow in humble adoration  
And there proclaim my God how great Thou art

### 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 - Jesus's Mission - Mark 8:1-26

Do you know the first explorer to reach the south pole?

It was a race between Robert Scott, and Roald Amundsen, and Amundsen won. He was a respected Norwegian explorer who was determined to beat the British expedition and be the first to reach the South Pole. He kept his plans to head south very secret.

Did you know however, that he had originally planned to head north, but he heard that the North Pole had been reached, so changed his mission.

Despite being at literally the opposite ends of the world, there are a lot of similarities in reaching the north and south poles - they are very cold, they are a long way away, and they both require extensive travel over ice ridden sea and snow.

Similarly in our gospel reading this morning, there are a lot of activities that are repeated, but there is also a lot of similarity between the distinct activities.

The gospel reading started with the feeding of a multitude. You may have thought that Mark might have had a bit of a senior's moment, and just repeated the account from last week of the feeding of the 5000. In this case, the details were slightly different, there were 4000 instead of 5000, there were seven loaves instead of 5, and there were only seven baskets left over, not 12. Also, although you may have missed it, the 5000 were fed near Bethsaida, a Jewish region, and the 4000 were fed in the region of Decapolis - a gentile region. Nevertheless, the story line was almost identical. Jesus was obviously repeating the miracle to make a point. As we read on, you realise that there were definitely two distinct, separate miracles as Jesus reminds the disciples of both feedings.

Jesus also seems to repeat the healing of the dead mute with the healing of the blind man. As with the deaf mute, Jesus took the man outside the village, and he put his spit on the man and touched the afflicted organs. It is interesting that this time, the man was not fully healed immediately, and while he could see, people looked like trees walking. He had to repeat the treatment of the blind man, placing his hand on his eyes a second time before the man could see properly.

The third instance of a repetition, or perhaps the requirement for repetition, was the Pharisees' demand for a sign. I think Mark is making a point in recording this request immediately after Jesus had performed the miracle of feeding the 4000. He's really asking what kind of sign do the Pharisees want? Isn't miraculously feeding 4000 enough? Wasn't feeding the 5000? Healing the deaf, mute and blind?

Jesus is a bit more blunt than I am. He first of all tells the Pharisees they won't be given a sign. Now, you might say, as I just have, that Jesus has already given them plenty of miraculous signs, and more were to come. This is absolutely true, so I think Jesus is saying that they won't be given the sort of sign that they are looking for, the undeniable gotcha that irrefutably points to Jesus being the Messiah they wanted.

Just like Pharaoh before the Exodus, they were given many signs, but their hearts were so hardened that they couldn't recognise what was in front of their eyes.

It is also significant that Jesus travelled from the gentile region (where he fed to 4000) to Dalmanutha on the west side of Lake Galilee where he was confronted by the Pharisees. After telling them he won't give them a sign, he gets back in the boat and sails back over to the other, Gentile side of the lake. It's almost as if he is giving up, at least for a time, with the Jews, to focus on the Gentiles. You will remember that last week, Jesus had told the Gentile, Syrophenician woman that his mission was to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles. Well, now it seems he is wholeheartedly focusing on the gentiles.

At this point, to emphasise this change, Jesus warned his disciples to look out for the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod. The apostles had heard what Jesus said, but they couldn't see what was in front of their eyes (or perhaps hear what was in front of their ears.). The apostles heard the word yeast, assumed Jesus was talking about bread, and jumped to the conclusion that he was telling them not to forget to buy bread next time. If it was my wife after I'd been shopping, they probably wouldn't have been far off the mark, but since the disciples had one loaf, and as twice Jesus had demonstrated his ability to multiply loaves, it should have been enough!

However, with a little bit of Old Testament background, Jesus' explanation of his parable, as well as our New Testament reading, we know the yeast is symbolic of a small amount of something that permeates and affects a large batch of dough. We also know that bread for the temple sacrifices had to be unleavened, that is, without yeast, in order to be acceptable to offer to God. Jesus was obviously saying that the way the Pharisees and Herod were going, even though they were a very small proportion of Israel, they could end up spoiling things for everyone. We know the Pharisees and Herod did everything for show - to please people without caring what God wanted, and if this attitude spread throughout Israel, and particularly if it permeated the church (with its gentiles) that was about to start, then it would all be a waste of time. So Jesus was focusing on telling the Gentiles how to please God, without the distractions of the Pharisees and Herod with a different message, and here the disciples were, arguing about who had forgotten to buy bread.

Our question now is how do we bring these ideas together, and what do they mean for us.



Just giving a quick recap of what has been happening: previously, Jesus sent out the apostles to the Jews, Jewish King Herod executed John the Baptist, Jesus fed the Jewish 5000, he argued with Jewish Pharisees about ritual uncleanness, he honours a gentile woman's request to heal her daughter he and heals a Jewish deaf mute. Now today, Jesus fed the gentile multitude, he refused the Pharisees' demand for a sign, he warned the apostles of the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod and he healed the Jewish blind man in 2 stages. While it is sometimes obvious, like when the Jewish Pharisees, or scribes, or even Jesus' family or home town are mention, you know that Jesus is dealing with Jews, However, as you read through Mark, every time you read that Jesus crosses the lake, you are also expected to understand that he is moving from Jewish to gentile territory, or vice versa. At this point, Jesus is increasing his mission towards the Gentiles, but as shown when he healed the deaf mute, he hasn't completely given up on the Jews.

I presume that most of us have predominantly non-Jewish, that is, gentile heritage, as are most of our family, friends and colleagues that we would want to tell about Jesus. Jesus is emphasising that his message is intended for the whole world, Jew and Gentile. He also doesn't shy away from changing his focus from one to the other when one group demands his attention, like the Syro Phoenician woman, or actively opposes his message as the Pharisees did by asking for signs that they just wouldn't recognise.

He also is not averse to repeating his message as often as necessary. He fed multitudes twice, he healed many people (both Jew and gentile), and it seems he was constantly arguing the difference between true righteousness and the law with Pharisees.

There is much from Jesus's example that we can model our ministry on. We need to share the good news with all sorts of people, be they Jews, Gentiles, Australian, immigrant, male, female, like us in some way, or completely different. They all need to hear the good new of salvation, although most will find many reasons to reject the message, the first, or perhaps the first few times they hear it. We must nevertheless not be afraid of repeating the message, in a way that maintains the truth of the message, but perhaps is more suited to the hearers and what they are prepared to listen to.

On the other hand, God may guide us when it is time to change our focus, to stop running up a brick wall for a time with a person or groups is rejecting the gospel out of hand, and turn to a different person or group that may be more responsive.

There is even a message here for our church services as Coom Anglican. I am sure that many of us are constantly trying to get family, friends and colleagues to come to our services here, but are starting to expect that some will never darken the door of a traditional Anglican church, or if they do, will never relate to a traditional prayerbook service.

As Jesus did not give up on the Jews, neither should we give up on our 'traditional Anglicans', but there is a time we should look at providing a service that is more relatable for people who haven't grown up with our tradition, or perhaps have even been turned off our tradition with unpleasant, perhaps uncomfortable or boring childhood experiences.

I am keen to hear your ideas about how we might do this, or even your offers of support to help us get started. As I have mentioned, there are two important ground rules that I will not break in doing this.

Whatever we do, we must remain faithful to the gospel - we all are sinners deserving God's judgement, and God came to earth as the perfectly sinless man Jesus Christ to bear the punishment we deserve in his body on the cross, and was raised from death to prove his victory over death and show us the eternal life we can all look forward to.

And secondly, we will not give up on our traditional Anglican brothers and sisters who have served us so faithfully all their lives. This may mean we have separate services that new people will join, or perhaps minor changes to existing services that retain the traditional character, but are still more relatable to newcomers.

Like Amundsen, we might be changing the focus of our outreach - not aiming for the North pole but the south, not focusing solely on the churched but the unchurched. Our mission will always be the same, to reach out to all people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If God is calling you to be part of this, or has given you ideas that we can use, please take the time to let me know, that we might move forward together in this vital work of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ alongside each other and co-workers with God.

Amen