

SUNDAY 5 May 2024 - St Paul's Cooma 9.30am, St Bartholomew's Bredbo 1130, St John's Adaminaby 4pm

Introduction

Hymn 215 - 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.**

Greeting

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

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. Mark 16:15,16

Prayer of Preparation

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

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.'

Prayer of the Day

O God of salvation,
the splendour of your glory dispels the darkness of earth, for in Christ we see the nearness of your kingdom. Now make us quick to follow him, and eager to proclaim the good news of the gospel.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Ministry of the Word

Genesis 2:4-9

⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. ⁵ Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, ⁶ but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷ Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. ⁸ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

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

Psalm 8

¹ LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens.

² **Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.**

³ When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

⁴ **what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?**

⁵ You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.

⁶ **You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet:**

⁷ all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild,

⁸ **the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.**

⁹ **LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

2 Timothy 1:8-12

⁸ So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. ⁹ He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹ And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. ¹² That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

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

Mark 16:14-19

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

¹⁴ Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. ¹⁵ He said to

them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.” ¹⁹ After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.

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

Sermon - God and the Gospel

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.

Prayers

Let us pray for the world and the church.

Response: Gracious God, 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.

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 TIS 111 - Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation

**Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation;
O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation.
Come all who hear, brothers and sisters draw near,
praise him in glad adoration.**

**Praise to the Lord who in all things is wondrously reigning
and, as on wings of an eagle, uplifting, sustaining:
have you not seen all that is needed has been
sent by his gracious ordaining?**

**Praise to the Lord, who will prosper our work and defend us;
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend us:
ponder anew, what the Almighty can do
as with his love he befriends us.**

**Praise to the Lord, who when darkness of sin is abounding,
who, when the godless do triumph, our best hopes confounding.
sheds forth his light, scatters the horrors of night,
saints with his mercy surrounding.**

**Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him.
Let the Amen, sound from his people again:
gladly for ever adore him.**

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 forever.

The 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.**

Loving God, we thank you for this world of wonder and delight. You have given it to us to care for, so that all your creatures may enjoy its bounty.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

We thank you that when we turned away from you, you sent Jesus to live and work as one of us, and bring us back to you. He showed us how to love you and set us free to love and serve one another.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

We thank you that on the cross Jesus took away our sin, all that keeps us from each other and from you. He frees us from hate and fear, from all that destroys love and trust.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

And so with everyone who believes in you, with all the saints and angels, we rejoice and praise you, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

And now we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine; may we who receive them, as Jesus said, share his body and his blood.

On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and gave you thanks. He broke the bread and gave it to his friends, and said, 'Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper he took the cup and gave you thanks. He shared the cup with them and said, 'This is my blood poured out so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

You have gathered us together to feed on Christ and to remember all he has done for us. Fill us with your Spirit that we may follow Jesus in all we do and say, working for justice and bringing your peace to this world that you have made. Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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.

After Communion

Father of all we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to

others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. **Keep us in this hope that we have grasped: so we and all your people will be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name.**

Hymn TIS 233 - I will sing the wondrous story

**I will sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me,
how he left the realms of glory
for the cross on Calvary.**

Refrain

**Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me,
sing it with the saints in glory,
gathered by the crystal sea.**

**I was lost: but Jesus found me,
found the sheep that went astray,
raised me up and gently led me
back into the narrow way. [Refrain]**

**Faint was I, and fears possessed me,
bruised was I from many a fall,
hope was gone, and shame distressed me:
but his love has pardoned all. [Refrain]**

**Days of darkness still may meet me,
sorrow's path I oft may tread;
but his presence still is with me,
by his guiding hand I'm led. [Refrain]**

**He will keep me till the river
rolls its waters at my feet:
then he'll bear me safely over,
where the loved ones I shall meet. [Refrain]**

Notices

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 - Mark 10 - Do not harden your hearts

Introduction - The gospel

If someone asked "Why do you go to church?" How would you answer?

Or perhaps if they asked you "What do Christians believe?"

A simple answer could be "the gospel"

Now gospel is a word that is used in a number of ways.

In the Greek dialect that our New Testaments were originally written in, the word for gospel is "euangellion", which literally mean "Good News" or Great Announcement. It was the word for the message that a new king had ascended the throne or similar great national events.

It is the word from which we get our English words "Evangelist", and "Evangelical". An evangelist is someone who tells people about Jesus so they might become Christians, and an evangelical is someone who places central importance, or at least very high priority on the gospel of Jesus Christ, on believing it and sharing it with people.

We often refer to the first four books of the New Testament as the gospels - the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These are written accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in other words, the good news of Jesus. These are expressions of the gospel, but they are not what we normally mean by 'the gospel,' at least not the way I will be using the term in this series of sermons.

Now I said that evangelicals place a very high importance on the gospel, and part of the reason for this is found in our gospel reading this morning. The reading from the end of Mark is known as the Great Commission, which is Jesus's last instructions to his disciples before he ascended into heaven. You will remember he said ""Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." The last instruction Jesus gave was to preach the gospel to all creation, so the gospel must be very important.

Our other New Testament reading this morning, from Paul's second letter to Timothy, also highlights the importance of the gospel to the apostle Paul, and in fact gives a brief summary of the message of the gospel. Paul sees the importance aspects of the gospel, at least in the context of his letter to Timothy, as:

⁹ God has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. "

This is one way of expressing the gospel, and it is worthwhile rereading this passage and considering whether it includes everything that you think it is important that you believe as a Christian.

There are other summaries of what Christians believe. Some ancient summaries are known as creeds, and we often recite one of these in our services. Today we will recite the apostles Creed, but sometimes we use one called the Nicene Creed as it was formulated during the council of Nicea.

However, in this series of sermons I will use a presentation of the gospel that has 4 elements

What we believe about God, what we believe about sin, what we believe about Jesus and what we believe about restoration. Today for the rest of this sermon, I want to focus on the first element - what do Christians believe about God?

God in the Gospel

So, what do you believe about God? Is he a large fellow in the clouds with a white beard who rains down hail storms on people he doesn't like? Is he a magic invisible friend we use as a sort of good luck charm? Is he the cosmic watchmaker who wound up the clockwork universe and let it run? Perhaps he's the shrinking God of the gaps, the explanation of all the things science can't explain - of at least until science develops a bit, and he shrinks some more?

These are parodies of some of the ways people think about God, but what does the Bible say about God?

One way of thinking about God is his eternal attributes. God is all powerful, all knowing and omni-present - existing everywhere in his creation all every time. We could look at these and consider what they mean for our understanding of God, but I prefer to look at how the Bible talks about God, and use that as our starting point.

The Bible starts by saying that God created the universe and everything in it, and he created it out of nothing. As we read in our old testament reading, God created heaven and earth. He sustains the earth by sending rain, planting plants for food and causing the sun to shine.

Most importantly, God created the world good. Throughout the account of creation in Genesis 1, God creates one aspect of the world, and then pronounces it 'good'. In verse 2, God saw that the light was good, in verse 10, God saw that the dry ground was good. Similarly with stars and planets, night and day, fish and birds, land animals, and finally, the entirety of creation, including humankind. In verse 31, God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

So not only is God the creator of the universe, he created a good, a perfect creation. The world we see around us now is not still perfect, we can all see glimpses, remnants of God's perfect creation in it. Who hasn't seen a glorious sunrise, wonderful landscapes, beautifully plumaged birds, majestic animals and even people celebrating the majesty of our world and thought that the God who made all this was truly a master. So God is not just creator, he created the perfect creation.

In order to create this perfectly good creation, Christians believe that God himself is totally good, and in fact the source of all goodness. As I said, the world doesn't

always look good to us, but this just shows us how far it has moved from its perfect beginnings. The evil we see does not mean that it didn't start out perfect, just that it has moved away from the original perfection that *Genesis* tells us was certainly there.

However, as we move on through *Genesis*, we find the first thing that is not good in God's perfect creation. In *Genesis* 2:20 no suitable helper for the man could be found, even though God had brought all the wild animals and the birds of the sky to Adam for him to give them names. It was not good for the man to be alone, it was not good for the man to be unable to be in relationship with other humans, and so God made Eve so there could be relationship within humanity.

For God's created creatures, goodness is expressed in relationships. *Genesis* talks of three types of relationships at the beginning of creation - God's relationship with his creation and it with him, humankind's relationship with the rest of creation, and it with us, and God's relationship with humankind, and our relationship with him. In order for the world to be perfect, each of these relationships must be in harmony and they were in the Garden of Eden - Adam walked side by side with God, plants were pleasing to the eye and good for food, mankind worked in the garden and took care of it, and Adam and Eve became one flesh, and felt no shame.

Finally, Christians believe that there is relationship, and potentially good and perfect relationships between God, creation and humankind, we also believe that there is relationship within God himself. While Christians believe there is only one true God, we also believe that at the same time, God is three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that these three have been in one perfect relationship for eternity - since before creation was brought into existence. This relationship within God is God's highest priority, and his relationship with humanity and the rest of his creation doesn't fall far behind. The central theme in the gospel is how the perfect relationship between God, humanity and creation is being restored, and that is why we have started this series by looking at who God is, because our relationship with him has to be our highest priority, because it will lead to the restoration of a perfect relationship with his creation, something that is sorely missing in our world today.

In the weeks to come, we will look at the other elements of the gospel: sin - or why the relationships I have talked about above are not as they should be, Jesus and God's chosen plan to restore these relationships, and restoration - what perfectly restored relationships can look like now, and will ultimately become. But more about these in the coming weeks.