

Sunday 9 September 2024 HC 2.1

Hymn TIS 373 Hail our once-despised Jesus

**Hail our once-despised Jesus
hail, our Galilean king
By your suffering you released us
and did free salvation bring.
Friend and universal Saviour,
Bearer of our sin and shame,
By your merits we find favour;
Life is given through your name**

**Paschal Lamb by God appointed,
All our sins on you were laid;
By almighty love anointed,
you have full atonement made;
all your people are forgiven
through the virtue of your blood;
opened is the gate of heaven
reconciled are we to God.**

**Jesus, hail! enthroned in glory,
there forever to abide;
All the heavenly host adore you,
Seated at your Father's side:
there for sinners you are pleading,
and for now our place prepare,
ever for us interceding
till in glory we appear.**

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

If the apostles' purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop them; you will only find yourselves fighting against God. Acts 5:38-39

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, you know us to be set in the midst of so many and so great dangers that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Joshua 7:10–12

¹⁰ The LORD said to Joshua, “Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? ¹¹ Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions.

¹² That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.

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

Psalm 34:1–14

¹ I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.

² **I will glory in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.**

³ Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.

⁴ **I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.**

⁵ Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.

⁶ **This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.**

⁷ The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

⁸ **Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.**

⁹ Fear the LORD, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing.

¹⁰ **The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.**

¹¹ Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

¹² **Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days,**

¹³ keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.

¹⁴ **Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.**

Acts Acts 5:1-5, 12-16, 34-42

¹ Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet. ³ Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.” ⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened.

¹² The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade. ¹³ No one else dared join them, even though they were

highly regarded by the people. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. ¹⁵ As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶ Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

³⁴ But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honoured by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. ³⁵ Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. ³⁶ Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. ³⁷ After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. ³⁸ Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. ³⁹ But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." ⁴⁰ His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. ⁴² Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

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

Mark 6:1–6

¹ Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?" ³ Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offence at him. ⁴ Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ He was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.

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

Sermon - Acts 5 -God's Power or Man's?

Question Time

The Apostles 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 and his kingdom will have no end.

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

The Spirit of truth comes to convict us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement. Let us open our hearts and 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 - Give thanks with a grateful heart

Give thanks with a grateful heart

Give thanks to the Holy One

Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ His Son

Chorus 1

**And now let the weak say I am strong
Let the poor say I am rich
Because of what the Lord has done for us**

**And now let the weak say I am strong
Let the poor say I am rich
Because of what the Lord has done for us**

Ending

Give thanks, give thanks.

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 - TIS 210 - *O for a thousand tongues to sing*

*O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of our God and King,
the triumphs of his grace! (x4)*

*Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
that bids our sorrows cease;
such music in the sinner's ears,
is life, and health, and peace (x4).*

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
he sets the prisoner free:
he sets the prisoner free:
his blood can make the foulest clean,
his blood availed for me. (x4)*

*He speaks, and listening to his voice
new life the dead receive,
new life the dead receive,
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe. (x4)*

Hear him, you deaf; his praise, you dumb,

*your loosened tongues employ;
your loosened tongues employ;
you blind, behold your Saviour come;
and leap, you lame, for joy! (x4)*

*My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim
assist me to proclaim
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honours of your name. (x4)*

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 - Acts 5 - God's power or man's?

Today we are up to chapter 5 of the book of Acts, and I've really had to think about what I would say about the first section.

As we read this morning, the first section is the sad tale of Ananias and Sapphira. They were members of the early church, and like others, including Barnabas, they had sold property in order to contribute to the church. Unfortunately, they tried to lie to God about it - they said that they had given all the proceeds to the church, but in reality, they had kept back some for themselves. Peter makes it clear that the only problem was their lie. He told Ananias "Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal?" There were many members of the church who had not sold property to support it, and it would have been entirely ok to have openly kept some of the money, but instead they tried to big note themselves and say they had given all the money to the church. Consequently, both Ananias and Sapphira died rather suddenly.

What am I to preach on this? More importantly, what should we all learn from this? As we have established, this shouldn't discourage anyone from selling property and giving part of the proceeds to the church. It is important that we all recognise that God is the source of all our property, and that it is only right that we share with his people and his church.

The Old Testament set a norm for giving of all the first fruits and a tithe of 10%. That is, a devout Jew would give his entire paypacket when he started a new job, and 10% of every subsequent pay. This is reasonable guidance, but I do not believe it is prescriptive for Christians. I have a good Christian friend whose father was so dogmatic about tithing that he would tithe to the church before he put food on the table, and my friend took a very long time out of the church working through this before he came back. I believe there is a place for being generous to God and faithfully trusting God to provide your, and your family's needs, but in that man's case the negative impact on his children's Christian lives outweighed this.

I strongly believe that your giving to God is between you and God - I can help you think about your own giving, and simplifying the process for you, but I really do not want to know how much you give - that is really between you and God.

So after that aside, it is worthwhile to look at the rest of the passage and see how the themes relate to Annanias and Sapphira. Verses 12 to 16 talk about how the apostles in the early church healed people. The people knew that God was healing people through the apostles, and they even brought their sick friends to where Peter's shadow would fall on them. Verse 16 says Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed. God is powerful in healing, and in judging.

Also, did you notice verses 13 and 14: the Christians were highly regarded by the people, but no one else dared join them. Then it says that 14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. When I read this I was confused because it seemed to be saying that no one was joining them, but many were being added to their number.

This is the way the church seems to be perceived in Cooma - people outside the church respect us, or at least don't directly oppose us, but they are extremely wary of joining us. However, people are added to our number, at least in God's eyes, when they believe in Jesus. As we share the gospel, people do hear and are saved, even if they never, or only rarely join us in church. We need to rejoice that even if few join us, some will pass through the gates of heaven into eternal life, which is far more important.

Moving on in Acts, in the third section, the apostles are persecuted - they were arrested, gaoled, and the governing council, the Sanhedrin, debated what to do with them. However, when they sent for the apostles to pass sentence on them, they found that the Holy Spirit had miraculously released them from gaol and they had gone back to preaching in the temple courts. When they were questioned, they gave their usual response: We must obey God rather than human beings, and rather cheekily took the opportunity to repeat the gospel. They reminded the Sanhedrin that the God of their ancestors raised Jesus from the dead —whom they killed by hanging him on a cross. 31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. 32 The apostles were witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.

The council wanted to execute the apostles, but Galiel, a teacher of the law, who Paul had happened to study under proposed a very wise approach. He said: "Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail.

39 But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

And this strikes me as the unifying theme of this passage, that the powerful God is at work, not men..

If Annanias and Sapphira were simply lying to the believers, nothing would have happened. Their gift, even if it wasn't the full amount, would have gone to the church and no one would have noticed the difference - but God knew and they paid the consequences.

If the healings were due to human agency, they probably wouldn't work, but they were the work of the powerful God, and so people were genuinely healed, and genuinely started to believe in Jesus.

And if the apostles were merely human power then they would fail and be forgotten like Theudas and Judas the Galilean before them, and the followers scattered. But Peter and the apostles were doing the work of the powerful God, and so his church has not been forgotten, but has continued throughout the centuries and continues today, around the other side of the world in the township of Cooma. The church is here, as well as also over the world, as testament to the real and powerful God who sent his Son to save his people, and sustains his church through His Holy Spirit until this very day.

Our church is the church of the one powerful, true God, creator of heaven and earth, and is saved to eternal life by his Son, Jesus Christ, who dies and was raised again for the church's salvation.

Is this the church of the powerful God that you not only admire, but that you stand with as the body of Christ?