

Cooma Anglican 6 October 2024 - 1st Order APBA

Welcome

Hymn TIS 194 - O love how deep, how broad, how high!

O love how deep, how broad, how high!
it fills the heart with ecstasy
that God, the Son of God, should take
our mortal form for mortals' sake.

He sent no angel to our race
of higher or of lower place
but wore the robe of human frame
himself, and to this lost world came.

For us he was baptised,
and bore his holy fast, and hungered sore;
for us temptations sharp he knew;
for us the tempter overthrew.

For us he prayed, for us he taught,
for us his daily works he wrought,
by words and signs and actions, thus
still seeking not himself but us.

For us to wicked hands betrayed,
scourged, mocked, in purple robe arrayed,
he bore the shameful cross and death;
for us at length gave up his breath.

For us he rose from death again,
for us he went on high to reign,
for us he sent his Spirit here
to guide, to strengthen and to cheer.

To him whose boundless love has won
salvation for us through his Son,
to God the Father, glory be
both now and through eternity.

Greeting

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Sentence of the Day

He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. Acts 9.4-5

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.'

Lord, have mercy on us, and write your law in our hearts by your Holy Spirit

Prayer of the Day

Faithful God, have mercy on us your unworthy servants, and increase our faith that, trusting in your Spirit's power to work in us and through us, we may never be ashamed to witness to our Lord but may obediently serve him all our days: through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

The Ministry of the Word

Ezekiel 3:22-27

²² The hand of the LORD was on me there, and he said to me, "Get up and go out to the plain, and there I will speak to you." ²³ So I got up and went out to the plain. And the glory of the LORD was standing there, like the glory I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown. ²⁴ Then the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet. He spoke to me and said: "Go, shut yourself inside your house. ²⁵ And you, son of man, they will tie with ropes; you will be bound so that you cannot go out among the people. ²⁶ I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be silent and unable to rebuke them, for they are a rebellious people. ²⁷ But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you shall say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' Whoever will listen let them listen, and whoever will refuse let them refuse; for they are a rebellious people.

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

Psalms 119:105-112

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

¹⁰⁶ **I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws.**

¹⁰⁷ I have suffered much; preserve my life, LORD, according to your word.

¹⁰⁸ **Accept, LORD, the willing praise of my mouth, and teach me your laws.**

¹⁰⁹ Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law.

¹¹⁰ **The wicked have set a snare for me, but I have not strayed from your precepts.**

¹¹¹ Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.

¹¹² **My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.**

Acts 9:1-23

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." ⁷ The men travelling with Saul

stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. ¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. ¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." ¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." ¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." ¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul in Damascus and Jerusalem Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" ²² Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah. ²³ After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him,

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

Matthew 19:21-26

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

²¹ Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. ²³ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶ Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

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

Sermon Acts 9 - The Christian Life 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.

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 forever.

Prayers

Let us pray for the world and the church.

Response: Lord, 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.

Exhortation

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we who would come to the holy communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ must consider how St Paul exhorts us to examine ourselves before presuming to eat of that bread and drink of that cup.

For the benefit is great, if with a penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy sacrament. We then spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood; we dwell in Christ and he in us; we are one with Christ and Christ with us.

Yet also the danger is great if we receive the bread and cup unworthily. Judge yourselves therefore, that you be not judged of the Lord. Repent truly of your sins, having a steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour. Amend your lives and love your neighbour.

Above all, give hearty thanks to God for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, truly God and truly human, who humbled himself to death on the cross for us sinners, that he might make us children of God, and raise us to eternal life.

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God and walking in his holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to strengthen and comfort you. But first, let us make a humble confession of our sins to almighty God.

Confession

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all people, we acknowledge with shame the sins we have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against your divine majesty, provoking most justly your wrath and indignation against us.

We earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for all our misdoings. Have mercy on us, most merciful Father. For your Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake forgive us all that is past, and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please you in newness of life, to the honour and glory of your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy has promised forgiveness of sins to all who with hearty repentance and true faith turn to him: have mercy on you; pardon and deliver you from all your sins; confirm and strengthen you in all goodness; and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hear the words of assurance for those who truly turn to Christ: If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the perfect offering for our sins. 1 John 2:1-2

Hymn TIS 378 The head that once was crown'd with thorns

The head that once was crown'd with thorns

Is crown'd with glory now

A royal diadem adorns

The mighty Victor's brow

The highest place that heaven affords

Is His by sovereign right

The King of kings and Lord of lords

And heaven's eternal light

The joy of all who dwell above

The joy of all below

To whom He manifests His love

And grants His name to know

To them the cross with all its shame

With all its grace is given

Their name an everlasting name

Their joy the joy of heaven

They suffer with their Lord below

They reign with Him above

Their profit and their joy to know

The mystery of His love

The cross He bore is life and health

Though shame and death to Him

His people's hope His people's wealth

Their everlasting theme

The Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, Lord, Mighty Creator and Eternal God. 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 hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Glory to you, O Lord most high.**

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.

All glory to you, our heavenly Father, for in your tender mercy you gave your only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death on the cross for our redemption: who made there, by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and instituted, and in his holy gospel commanded us to continue, a perpetual memory of his precious death until his coming again.

Hear us, merciful Father, we humbly pray, and grant that we who receive these gifts of your creation, this bread and this wine, according to your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed body and blood; who on the night he was betrayed 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 which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' Likewise after supper he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, 'Drink from this, all of you; for this is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' Amen.

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

Almighty and everliving God, we heartily thank you that you graciously feed us, who have duly received these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, and thus assure us of your favour and goodness towards us and that we are true members of the mystical body of your Son, the blessed company of all faithful people, and are also heirs, through hope, of your eternal kingdom, by the merits of the most precious death and passion of your dear Son. And we humbly beseech you, heavenly Father, so to assist us with your grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as you have prepared for us to walk in, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, world without end.

Hymn TIS 431 Thanks to God whose Word was spoken

Thanks to God whose Word was spoken

In the deed that made the earth

His the voice that called a nation

His the fires that tried her worth

**God has spoken, God has spoken
Praise Him for His open Word**

**Thanks to God whose Word incarnate
Glorified the flesh of man
Deeds and words and death and rising
Tell the grace in heaven's plan
God has spoken, God has spoken
Praise Him for His open Word**

**Thanks to God whose Word was written
In the Bible's sacred page
Record of the revelation
Showing God to every age
God has spoken, God has spoken
Praise Him for His open Word**

**Thanks to God whose Word is published
In the tongues of every race
See its glory undiminished
By the change of time or place
God has spoken, God has spoken
Praise Him for His open Word**

**Thanks to God whose Word is answered
By the Spirit's voice within
Here we drink of joy unmeasured
Life redeemed from death and sin
God is speaking, God has spoken
Praise Him for His open Word**

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 - Acts 9 - The Christian Life

If you were an apostle, which one would you be? If you consider your Christian life, do you consider yourself a Peter, a very headstrong person answering every question with the first thing that came into your head, even if in hindsight it obviously wasn't very bright? Or perhaps Jude the lesser (Thaddeus), the author of the smallest contribution to the new testament, and often confused with Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus. Perhaps Bartholomew, whom we particularly remembered in the church calendar yesterday, and is the patron Saint of our Bredbo church. I hope you don't see yourself as Judas Iscariot!

Or perhaps you see yourself as a Paul of Tarsus, who was originally called Saul (and I'll use both names in this sermon), and we first heard about last week, approving of Stephen being martyred.

If you were to see yourself as a Paul, I wonder what you would see in yourself as similar to him. We know that Paul wrote roughly 30% of the New Testament, and was the great apostle to the gentiles, making several missionary journeys across the Roman empire, preaching the gospel, bringing hundreds to Christ and starting numerous churches. Perhaps you see yourself like that?

Well, you might think that there is nothing in this that is similar to you, but today I want to say that there is a lot in Paul's Christian journey that is common with yours, and pretty well all Christian lives. The details, and the magnitude are obviously different, but the structure, the framework should strike a chord. So let's look at what we learn about Saul in Acts 9, and see how it is similar to us.

Rebellion

Firstly, as I mentioned, the first thing we hear about Saul was that he approved of Stephen being executed. Things only got worse in today's reading, Saul was breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples, and he went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

I'm sure no one here today persecuted the church to this extent, none of you actively sought to have all Christians arrested, but nevertheless, before you became Christians, you all rebelled against Christ and his church. Our gospel reading tells us

that no one is perfect in God's eyes because we all rebel against God. We may not approve someone being executed just because they are Christian, or go from house to house trying to arrest Christians, but we all rebel against God.

The rich young ruler in our gospel tried to claim that he kept all the commandments. Perhaps he had never murdered, committed adultery, stolen, or even given false testimony, dishonoured his father and mother, or not loved his neighbour as himself; although I sincerely doubt he kept these last three as much as he claimed, but I know he fell short at the first of the 10 commandments, which Jesus didn't even ask him about. He obviously didn't love God with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his mind because he loved his wealth more. He, like everyone, including us, rebelled against God.

So the first part of Saul's Christian journey, the pre Christian bit, was similar to every other Christian, he rebelled against God.

Conversion

The second part of Paul's Christian journey was that Jesus convicted him of his sin, he repented and put his faith in Christ. In other words, Saul was converted.

The details of Saul's conversion are probably different to yours - none of you have told me that Jesus spoke to you out of a bright light that left you blind for three days, but if you are a Christian, Christ had spoken to you in some way - perhaps through the Bible, perhaps through friends or Christian ministers. You have repented your sins and have given your life to Christ. If you don't think this has happened to you, talk to me or trusted Christian friends about it, and ask Christ into your life that you may gain eternal life, just as Saul did.

Ministry/evangelism

Next, when you are converted to Christianity, the Holy Spirit nearly always convicts us of the importance of ministry to our fellow believers. Saul started by preaching in the synagogues in Damascus that Jesus is the Son of God, and tried to join the disciples in Jerusalem to minister to them. We know from his letters about how he travelled throughout the entire Roman empire, preaching the gospel, ministering to people and starting new churches. Not many of us minister to this extent, but some are called to be missionaries, some to be church planters, some to be deacons, priests or bishops in the Anglican scheme, and all Christians are called to share the

gospel with their friends and colleagues, and all are called to minister to their Christian brothers and sisters by showing Christian love and charity.

During the reformation in the 1500s, through Christians like Luther and Cranmer, the church rediscovered the priesthood of all believers, that is, that we all can serve God directly in the way only the priests could in the old testament, The ministryhood of all believers is equally important - God has called us all to minister to each other, and when we receive the Holy Spirit, that is what we do.

Persecution

The next stage in Saul's Christian journey was his persecution. It wasn't long after he was converted before his persecution started. It was hardly surprising, since he himself had persecuted the church before he was converted, so it was hardly surprising that some in the church were aggrieved at him. Also, later on, Paul was led by God to understand that not only Jews but gentiles could become Christians, and neither Jews nor gentiles had to keep the Jewish ceremonial or food laws, or even be circumcised to be Christian, and this upset a lot of Jews who thought otherwise, and consequently were determined to persecute anyone who taught otherwise, and particularly Saul.

Most usually don't have to be Christians for long before they experience persecution. Fortunately today in Australia the persecution we experience is usually mild - sometimes being rejected from the right social circles, sometimes discrimination at work, in job finding or promotions. Today Christians most often get discriminated against for holding moral views that are at odds with the rest of society.

Unfortunately the world has a different view on what is good for society as a whole than Christians, and will often give Christians a hard time when they are just trying to maintain God's standards in their own lives and for the good of society. It also doesn't help that some Christians try to impose their standards on the rest of society which society doesn't like, and this tends to tarnish all Christians.

In any case, Jesus had warned us that all Christians can expect to be persecuted and to suffer. In John 15, Jesus tells us that since he was persecuted, we should expect to be persecuted. Many Christians in other countries know this much more than we do. In some Islamic countries, Christians are often forcibly made to recant their faith or even imprisoned or murdered for their faith. We don't know for sure, but it is likely that Paul eventually died for his faith in a prison in Rome.

Growth

The final element of Saul's Christian journey we are looking at this morning is Christian growth. Verse 22 says Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah. Despite his direct experience of the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, Saul still needed much growth as a Christian. He needed to learn more about what Christians believe, and he needed to grow in confidence to proclaim the gospel to those who need to hear.

We are no different. As Christians we need to study our Bibles, we need to share in fellowship with older Christians to learn more about our faith, how to share it, and apologetics - or how to defend the gospel against falsehoods and other attacks. Fellowship also helps us learn to share our Christian love with our Christian brothers and sisters, and we even learn patterns of worship that both honour God and build up the church.

Conclusion

Obviously there is much more to the Christian life than I have discussed this morning. Some things in your Christian life will be similar to Saul's, and many things will be different. Nevertheless, every Christian will have rebelled against God before they are converted. They are all called to some form of Christian Ministry and Leadership - in the church, in their families and amongst their friends and work colleagues. Every Christian can expect some degree of persecution and suffering, and every Christian needs to grow in their Christian life.

You may not have imagined yourself as the apostle Paul, or even any of the other apostles - but you do have these similarities with all the apostles. Also, empowered by the holy spirit, all the apostles did great things for the church - bringing it from a handful of believers hiding in a room in Jerusalem to the Jerusalem church of thousands in the first week, to a worldwide church of billions within 2000 or so years. And you have exactly the same holy spirit empowering you, and so God can, and will do great things through you, as he did through Saul, who was initially persecutor, and then worldwide evangelist and, with the holy spirit, builder of the church throughout the world.

Will you strive, with God's help, to be similar to Saul in this way too?