

Cooma Anglican Sunday 29 December 2024 HC 2.1 (Sung responses)

Introduction

Hymn – TIS 121 God Himself is present

**Jesus call us here to meet Him
As through word and song and prayer
We affirm God's promised presence
Where His people live and care
Praise the God who keeps His promise
Praise the Son who calls us friends
Praise the Spirit who among us
To our hopes and fears attends**

**Jesus calls us to confess Him
Word of Life and Lord of All
Sharer of our flesh and frailness
Saving all who fail or fall
Tell His holy human story
Tell His tales that all may hear
Tell the world that Christ in glory
Came to earth to meet us here**

**Jesus calls us to each other
Found in Him are no divides
Race and class and sex and language
Such are barriers He derides
Join the hand of friend and stranger
Join the hands of age and youth
Join the faithful and the doubter
In their common search for truth**

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.

**[Sung] Lord, Have mercy x3
Christ, have mercy x3
Lord, have mercy x3**

The Gloria (sung)

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth

Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father,

we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father

Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;

you are seated at the right hand of God the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the most high,
Jesus Christ,

with the holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father, Amen

Sentence of the Day

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Acts 8:30-31

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 Community, whose call is more insistent than the ties of family and blood: may we so love and respect those whose lives are linked with ours that we fail not in loyalty to you, but make choices according to your will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

1 Samuel 2: 18-20

¹⁸ But Samuel was ministering before the LORD—a boy wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹ Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. ²⁰ Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, “May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD.” Then they would go home.

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

Psalms 148

¹ Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights above.

² **Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his heavenly hosts.**

³ Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars.

⁴ **Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.**

⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD, for at his command they were created,

⁶ **and he established them for ever and ever—he issued a decree that will never pass away.**

⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,

⁸ **lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding,**

⁹ you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars,

¹⁰ **wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds,**

¹¹ kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth,

¹² **young men and women, old men and children.**

¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.

¹⁴ **And he has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his faithful servants of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the LORD.**

Colossians 3:12-17

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

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

Luke 2:41-52

⁴¹ Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. ⁴³ After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

⁴⁹ “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man

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

Sermon - God and Family

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: Lord 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

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3.16

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.**

Agnus Dei (sung)

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Redeemer of the world, grant us your peace.

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 578 How firm a foundation

Child in the manger, infant of Mary;

outcast and stranger, Lord of all!

Child who inherits all our transgressions,

all our demerits on him fall.

Once the most holy child of salvation

gently and lowly lived below;

now, as our glorious mighty Redeemer,

see him victorious over each foe.

Prophets foretold him, infant of wonder;

angels behold him on his throne;

worthy our Saviour of all their praises;

happy for ever are his own.

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:

[Sung]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.'

[Sung]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:

[Sung]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 446 Glorious things of you are spoken (tune Austria)

Unto us a boy is born King of all creation

Came He to a world forlorn The Lord of every nation

Cradled in a stall was He With sleepy cows and asses

But the very beasts could see That He all men surpasses

Herod then with fear was filled A prince he said in Jewry

All the little boys he killed at Bethl'hem in his fury

Now may Mary's Son who came So long ago to love us

Lead us all with hearts aflame unto the joys above us

Alpha and Omega He Let the organ thunder

While the choir with peals of glee doth rend the air asunder

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 - Luke 2:41-52 - God and Family

Have you ever lost one of your children? When we moved back to Canberra in 97 we were staying in some high rise apartments while we were looking for a house to live in. Our eldest daughter was about 3 years old, and one day as we were going out she ran ahead of us to the lifts and got in. Before Cath and I got there, the doors shut and the lift left our floor. I caught up with the lift on the ground floor only to find she'd got out on another floor so I had to check all 15 floors to find out which one she was on. Naturally we were worried sick and all sorts of dire possibilities went through our minds. While our daughter wasn't worried by the incident, we learnt a valuable lesson about keeping her close. I've been thinking all week about the lessons we can learn from our gospel reading today, when Mary and Joseph left Jesus behind in Jerusalem when he was 12.

Before we examine that question, let's have a look at the passage. Firstly, Joseph and Mary were devout. Every year they went to Jerusalem for the Passover, which was the primary festival of the Jewish year, and when Jesus was twelve, it was even more important, as he was on the cusp of being considered a man.

The distance from Nazareth to Jerusalem is about 150km. This might not sound very far, but they were walking, so it was probably 3 to 5 days each way. And don't forget they had at least one child, and almost definitely more as Jesus got older. I know I wouldn't be keen on taking kids on two 150km walks every year, but Joseph and Mary did it. At least there would have been a reasonable contingent of families from Nazareth, and it is likely the kids would have hung out together, with the different families taking turns at supervising them, but its still not my idea of a holiday

It is also a good thing that they didn't have the Department of Community and Justice in those days. They were a day on the way back to Nazareth before Mary and Joseph realised they'd left Jesus behind. Their excuse was that they thought he was with another family, but I'm not sure this would have satisfied DCJ.

After a day of retracing their steps, and three days looking in Jerusalem, they finally find the troublesome 12 year old. This is about 100 times longer than it took us to find our three year old, but I won't say we were any less worried. He was in the temple, debating with the teachers. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers, including Mary and Joseph. I suspect however that this didn't stop them from wanting to strangle him. Mary said "Son, why have you

treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." but I suspect this was much more printable than what Joseph was probably thinking!

Jesus's answer wouldn't have calmed them down any. He said "Why were you searching for me?" "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" Luke tells us that Mary and Joseph did not understand what he was saying to them, but I want to consider what we are to understand from this.

We know that Joseph was not Jesus's genetic father, although I suspect that no else there was aware of this. They would have presumed Joseph was the father. Their culture placed a very high priority on honouring parents. The fifth commandment is "honour your father and mother", and Exodus 21 even prescribes the death penalty for cursing your parents.. Even though Jesus was a rebellious teen-ager on the cusp of adulthood who we might expect to be disrespectful, his behaviour would have been very serious in that culture.

Jesus said he had to be in the temple, his father's house, and basically says God is his father. We do not share this unique relationship with God, God is our father, albeit in a different sense, as Jesus constantly reminds his followers. Therefore, like Jesus, our relationship with God as our father should take priority over our human parents as it did for Jesus. This is the view I hold, although not just from this passage, and so our relationship with God our father should take priority over our relationship with our human parents, and our wider human family, such as your husband or wife. The points that I am about to make regarding parents also apply to marriage partners and any others we have family responsibility to, such as brothers and sisters and even your children and grandparents but there will be some differences that you can talk to me about at another time if this is an issue for you.

So, what does this passage mean for us? The first thing, if God is your priority, then obeying God is more important than keeping your family happy. But, respecting parents in particular is still important. Jesus condemns the Jewish practice of Corban, which was a way of avoiding honouring parents by saying what you would provide for them was dedicated to God. Also, Ephesians tells children to obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right, and Colossians commands "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord". The New Testament clearly considers disobedience or disrespect of parents as sinful, so the Bible takes responsibility and respect for family very seriously.

I know things change when you become a responsible adult at age 18 for most things in Australia, but when you are still living in your parents home, and whenever what you do affects your parents, then respecting your parents and other family should always be an important consideration for you, even if it is not as important as obeying God

God's priority means,, amongst other things, that if your parents try to forbid you from being a Christian, from praying or reading your Bible, then you should disobey them in this for the sake of your relationship with God and your eternal salvation.

I also know that for many of us, there is not a major conflict between obeying God and our parents. Fortunately, today in Australia, few parents violently object to us being Christians, particularly when we are adults. But this is not universally the case - parents who hold strongly to other faiths, or see their different faith as critical to their culture can actively try to prevent their children being Christian. Parents who are devout atheists (even though they probably wouldn't call themselves that) can find all sorts of ways to discourage a faith in their children, and the consequences they use may not be pleasant, I've known Christians who have been written out of wills, denied university education, denied places in family companies and even cut off from family relationships or otherwise ostracised. Jesus warns of the possibility of all these things, but still expects us to remain faithful to him.

Also, whether or not parents object to children being Christian, they can object to the way children express their faith in Christ. This is more complicated as we might be able to express our faith in ways that don't offend our parents, while still remaining faithful to God. It is not sinful to not go into a particular form of ministry, such as ordained ministry, or overseas missionary work, even if you have your heart set on it.

The key point here is that your faith in God your father takes priority over obedience to your human families, but our human family is still important, just as it was in Jesus' day. How important can depend on your age, your marriage status and cultural matters, but it should always be a consideration..

As I keep highlighting from this pulpit, Christianity is not about keeping rules or commandments, but about your relationship with God through Jesus's death and resurrection. There is very little, outside this relationship that is absolutely necessary

to your salvation. These other things can be really helpful, but they aren't necessary for salvation. For example, you can definitely be a Christian without coming to a particular church, even though you really should fellowship with other Christians whenever you can to give and get encouragement, support and accountability it provides your faith. But if your family forbids you attending a particular church, then obeying them in order to show your respect is a real option. If there is a way to get the fellowship without unduly disrespecting them, then find a way to do it. Perhaps attend a different church, perhaps meet with other Christians in a work fellowship, and perhaps you avoid that particular church until you are older. Also, respectfully trying to argue your parents around is an option.

There are many other aspects of expressing your Christian faith that could be similar to this. Giving up a university degree to take up a particular form of ministry, or going overseas for missionary work (particularly if this affects grandchildren), the subjects you bring up at the dinner table at home, or cutting off communication with family members because they aren't Christians are things you might feel you need to do because of your relationship with God, but could all reasonably be given up because of the importance of family.

The Bible specifically tells us not to divorce because your husband or wife is not a Christian, so this is out, unless they initiate the divorce. This is always a complex matter that I don't want to go into now, but please seek godly counsel if it looks like becoming an issue for you.

The key message is that the relationship with your heavenly father is a Christians highest responsibility, but our human families are still a priority, albeit a lower priority. Where there is a genuine conflict in these priorities, you need to think clearly whether you can maintain your faith while being respectful to your human family, and how to maintain your faith while minimising disrespect. It will inevitably be complicated, so always seek godly Christian counsel. If we show obedience in this really hard teaching, or where not possible, the maximum respect possible to our parents, perhaps like Mary our family will keep these things in their hearts, and perhaps one day even put their own faith in Jesus.

Amen