

Sunday 16 February 2025 HC 3

### Hymn: TIS 137 For the beauty of the earth

For the beauty of the earth, For the beauty of the skies  
For the love which from our birth, Over and around us lies

Chorus

*Christ, our God, to you we raise this our sacrifice of praise.*

For the beauty of each hour, Of the day and of the night  
Hill and vale and tree and flower, Sun and moon and stars of light *Chorus*

For the joy of ear and eye, For the heart and mind's delight  
For the mystic harmony Linking sense to sound and sight *Chorus*

For the joy of human love, Brother sister parent child  
Friends on earth and friends above, For all gentle thoughts and mild *Chorus*

For Thy church that evermore Lifting holy hands above  
Offers up on every shore the pure sacrifice of love *Chorus*

### Sentence of Scripture

And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good. 2 Thessalonians 3:13

### The Great Commandments

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: 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.' 'This is the great and first commandment.

And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

### 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 rest and gladness, we praise you for the dignity of work and the joy of play, for the challenge of witness and for the invitation to delight at your table. Renew our hearts through your sabbath rest, so that we might be refreshed to continue in your work of restoring the world to wholeness. Amen

### Proverbs 19:15-21

<sup>15</sup> Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless go hungry.

<sup>16</sup> Whoever keeps commandments keeps their life, but whoever shows contempt for their ways will die. <sup>17</sup> Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for

what they have done. <sup>18</sup> Discipline your children, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to their death.

<sup>19</sup> A hot-tempered person must pay the penalty; rescue them, and you will have to do it again.

<sup>20</sup> Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.

<sup>21</sup> Many are the plans in a person's heart but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

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

### **Psalm 7:8-17**

<sup>8</sup> Let the LORD judge the peoples. Vindicate me, LORD, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High.

<sup>9</sup> **Bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure—you, the righteous God who probes minds and hearts.**

<sup>10</sup> My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart.

<sup>11</sup> **God is a righteous judge, a God who displays his wrath every day.**

<sup>12</sup> If he does not relent, he will sharpen his sword; he will bend and string his bow.

<sup>13</sup> **He has prepared his deadly weapons; he makes ready his flaming arrows.**

<sup>14</sup> Whoever is pregnant with evil conceives trouble and gives birth to disillusionment.

<sup>15</sup> **Whoever digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit they have made.**

<sup>16</sup> The trouble they cause recoils on them; their violence comes down on their own heads.

<sup>17</sup> **I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness; I will sing the praises of the name of the LORD Most High**

### **2 Thessalonians 3:6-18**

<sup>6</sup> In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. <sup>7</sup> For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, <sup>8</sup> nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. <sup>9</sup> We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. <sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." <sup>11</sup> We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. <sup>12</sup> Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. <sup>13</sup> And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good. <sup>14</sup> Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. <sup>15</sup> Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.

<sup>16</sup> Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. <sup>17</sup> I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. <sup>18</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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

### **Matthew 18:15-20**

<sup>15</sup> “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. <sup>16</sup> But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ <sup>17</sup> If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

<sup>18</sup> “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

<sup>19</sup> “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

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

### **Sermon - 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18 - The Sluggard**

#### **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.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

#### **The Prayers of the People**

Let us pray for the world and the church

**Response:** 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

We are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. 1 John 3:2-3

### The Confession

Knowing the goodness of God and our failure to respond with love and obedience, let us confess our sins, saying together:

**Heavenly Father, you have loved us with an everlasting love, but we have broken your holy laws and have left undone what we ought to have done.**

**We are sorry for our sins and turn away from them.**

**For the sake of your Son who died for us, forgive us, cleanse us and change us.**

**By your Holy Spirit, enable us to live for you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. John 3:16

### 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 653 This Is a day of new beginnings

**This Is a day of new beginnings,  
Time to remember and move on,  
Time to believe what love is bringing,  
Laying to rest the pain that's gone.**

**For by the life and death Of Jesus,  
Love's mighty spirit, now as then,  
Can make for us a world of difference,  
As faith and hope are born again.**

**Then let us, with the Spirit's daring,  
Step from the past and leave behind  
Our disappointment, guilt, and grieving,  
Seeking new paths, and sure to find.**

**In faith we'll gather round the table  
to taste and share what love can do.  
This is a day of new beginnings;  
our God is making all things new.**

### 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.**

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things,

making us in your own image. We praise you for your son, our saviour Jesus Christ, who by his death on the cross and rising to new life offered the one true sacrifice for sin and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people. Therefore, we lift our voices to 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, gracious God, we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine, and pray that we who receive them in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit according to our Saviour's word, in remembrance of his suffering and death, may share his body and his blood.

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread, and when he had given you thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying 'Take and eat. This is my body which is given for you.

We who are many are one body in Christ,

**for we all share in the one bread.**

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 which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

We eat this bread and drink this cup **to proclaim the death of the Lord.**

We do this until he returns. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

Father, as we recall his saving death and glorious resurrection, may we who share these gifts be renewed by the Holy Spirit, and united in the body of your Son. Bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom, there to feast at your table and join in your eternal praise.

**Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever. Amen**

### **The Holy Communion**

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.

### After Communion

Gracious God, thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the body and blood of our saviour Jesus Christ. Thank you for assuring us of your goodness and love, and that we are living members of Christ's body.

**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.**

### Notices

#### Hymn - TIS 650 Brother, sister, let me serve you

Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey  
and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you  
in the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you  
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;  
when you laugh, I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven  
we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together  
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

### 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 - 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18 - The Sluggard**

You may have noticed that our New Testament reading today talked a bit about idle, or lazy people. When I started preaching, I would always start my sermon with a joke that was relevant to the topic and as I was writing this sermon, it occurred to me that there are actually a lot of jokes about laziness. But do you know what, I just couldn't be bothered using the internet to find them. Perhaps I need to read this passage carefully!

There are also a lot in the book of proverbs that talk about laziness. You heard one in our Old Testament reading this morning: <sup>5</sup> Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless go hungry.

I particularly also like the proverbs about the sluggard. Isn't that a wonderful word that rolls off the tongue - sluggard. Some Bibles translate it 'the lazy one', or 'the slacker', and one obscure translation calls him the lazy bum', but I think I'll stick with 'sluggard'.

Proverbs says (NIV) 6 Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! 7 It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, 8 yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. 9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? 10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest —11 and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.

I must admit, particularly with a three year old grandson, that 10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest has a certain appeal!

Another proverb I really liked is 'The sluggard says, "There's a lion outside! I'll be killed in the public square!"' That sounds like the sort of excuse my grandson would make.

We may well laugh about idleness, but it was a real concern for Paul with some Thessalonians. He commands the church In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. Paul is completely serious - it is not just a warning or a suggestion, but a commandment in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps I should rethink my desire for little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest!

But why was Paul so serious about idleness in the church? He calls these sluggards 'brothers and sisters' so they are in the church.



Firstly, we should note that these people are not just idle, Paul also called them disruptive and do not live according to the teaching they received from Paul. He also says that they are not busy (which is not surprising if they are idle), but he calls them busybodies: They bustle about uselessly, they busy themselves about trifling, needless, useless matters, they are officiously inquisitive about other's affairs.

It is easy to see how these people are disrupting the Christian community, and this is what I think Paul is most concerned about.

They are also not living according to the teaching they received from Paul. If you read back through I Thessalonians you will remember that in it Paul exhorted them to godly living - to live lives pleasing to God and free from sexual immorality. Paul also gave assurance about the eternal state of believers who had died - eternal life. We'll come back to this assurance, but I'm sure we have all heard of churches that have been not only disrupted, but completely destroyed by sexual immorality. Of course Paul wants the Thessalonian church, and our church, to be completely free of it.

As I mentioned, Paul's teaching included teaching about the day that Jesus will return. We have already heard in this second letter that some were distorting this teaching by saying that Jesus had already returned and it seems from both letters that there were other distortions as well, suggesting it would not happen. It appears this false teaching was in some way contributing to the idleness that Paul was warning against. If they believed that they had missed Jesus's return, then there was no point in them working for a living in their normal jobs, and they might as well sponge off other believer's godly generosity. By not bothering with even working to provide for themselves, they certainly could not develop the means that they could show generosity to others.

This taking advantage of generosity would also disrupt the church, perhaps even more insidiously than sexual immorality. At least sexual immorality was clearly against Christian teaching and Paul's message, with no excuse. But idleness was apparently being justified from what was claimed to be Paul's teaching, even if it was a perversion of it.

Paul's teaching when misinterpreted could have been said to encourage idleness, and it could also been misinterpreted to encourage sinfulness. The message of the gospel is that Jesus has done everything to save us from our sin to eternal life by doing on the cross in our place. Some reasoned that there is nothing more that we must do to gain salvation, and nothing we can do to lose that salvation. As Romans 6 tells us: that some were saying: Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? Shall we live in disobedience because then Jesus will forgive us all the more and show even more glory.

In Roman's, Paul responded 2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? The same applies to the Thessalonians - how can they live in disobedience to Paul's message of the gospel response to the forgiveness Jesus had won? The fact that Jesus has done everything necessary for our salvation certainly means that there is nothing we have to do for our salvation, and no sin by which we can lose our salvation. Jesus death was sufficient for every sinner and sluggard - but nevertheless, our response to our salvation must be to avoid sin and idleness at all costs. To do otherwise simply either shows that we don't appreciate the salvation Jesus has won for us - or that perhaps we haven't accepted it.

Consequently, Paul commands the Thessalonians to not associate with the sluggards and those who haven't followed his teaching, in order that they may feel ashamed.<sup>15</sup> Even so, he says to not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.

Last week, in contrast with the Thessalonians church, I mentioned that I was not aware of any evil or wicked people here in the church in Cooma, and I still believe that is the case, in case any of you are worried. Similarly, I am not concerned that any of you are so sinfully idle that the rest of the church should avoid associating with you. Of course, if any of you are worried there might be such idle people amongst us, please talk to them, or me before you do anything about it.

On the other hand, if you think you yourself are sinfully idle, then you can also talk to me, and I am sure I can help you find things that are within your gifts, capability and capacity that would prevent your idleness concerns. I am sure you can think of them yourself, but I am always happy to help in this way, not just to avoid your idleness, but also to help grow this church that God has given us, to share the ministry load, and to show our love and generosity to each other.

Finally, Paul concludes his letter, and I will conclude this sermon series with the words: 'Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.'

Paul, wrote that greeting in his own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all his letters. This is how he wrote.

<sup>18</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And as good Anglicans, all the people said 'And also with you'