

**Sunday 18 May 2025 HC 3**

**Hymn: TIS 225 My heart and voice I raise**

**My heart and voice I raise, To spread Messiah's praise;  
Messiah's praise let all repeat;  
The universal Lord, By whose almighty word,  
Creation rose in form complete.**

**A servant's form he wore, And in his body bore  
Our dreadful curse on Calvary:  
He like a victim stood, And poured his sacred blood,  
To set the guilty captives free.**

**But soon the Victor rose Triumphant o'er his foes,  
And led the vanquished host in chains:  
He threw their empire down, His foes compelled to own,  
O'er all the great Messiah reigns.**

**With mercy's mildest grace, He governs all our race  
In wisdom, righteousness, and love:  
Who to Messiah fly, Shall find redemption nigh,  
And all his great salvation prove.**

**Hail, Saviour, Prince of peace! Thy kingdom shall increase,  
Till all the world your glory see;  
And righteousness abound, As the great deep profound,  
And fill the earth with purity!**

**Sentence of Scripture**

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

**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**

Saving God, who called your church to witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself; help us so to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be

reconciled to you; through him who died for us and rose again, and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

### **Numbers 21:4-9**

<sup>4</sup> They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; <sup>5</sup> they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

<sup>6</sup> Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup> The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” <sup>9</sup> So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

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

### **Psalms 87**

<sup>1</sup> He has founded his city on the holy mountain.

<sup>2</sup> **The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the other dwellings of Jacob.**

<sup>3</sup> Glorious things are said of you, city of God:

<sup>4</sup> **“I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me—Philistia too, and Tyre, along with Cush—and will say, ‘This one was born in Zion.’”**

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, of Zion it will be said, “This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High himself will establish her.”

<sup>6</sup> **The LORD will write in the register of the peoples: “This one was born in Zion.”**

<sup>7</sup> **As they make music they will sing, “All my fountains are in you.”**

### **1 Peter 1:17-23**

<sup>17</sup> Since you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. <sup>18</sup> For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. <sup>20</sup> He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. <sup>21</sup> Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

<sup>22</sup> Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. <sup>23</sup> For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

### **John 3:1-22**

<sup>1</sup> Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher

who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

<sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

<sup>4</sup> “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

<sup>9</sup> “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

<sup>10</sup> “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? <sup>11</sup> Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. <sup>12</sup> I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. <sup>19</sup> This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

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

## **Sermon - You Must be Born Again**

### **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.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, 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

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

1 Corinthians 11:26-28

### 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 517 Hallelujah! sing to Jesus

Hallelujah! sing to Jesus, his the sceptre, his the throne;  
hallelujah! his the triumph, his the victory alone;  
hark, the songs of peaceful Zion thunder like a mighty flood:  
'Jesus out of every nation has redeemed us by his blood.'

Hallelujah! not as orphans, are we left in sorrow now;  
hallelujah! he is near us, faith believes, nor questions how;  
though the cloud from sight received him when the forty days were o'er,  
shall our hearts forget his promise, 'I am with you evermore'?

Hallelujah! bread of heaven, and on earth our food, our stay;  
hallelujah! here the sinful flee to you from day to day;  
intercessor, friend of sinners, earth's redeemer, plead for me  
where the songs of all the sinless sweep across the crystal sea.

Hallelujah! King eternal, you the Lord of lords we own;  
hallelujah! born of Mary, earth your footstool, heav'n your throne:  
you within the veil have entered, robed in flesh, our great high priest;  
you on earth both priest and victim in the eucharistic feast.

### 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 forever 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 216 Rejoice the Lord is King**

Rejoice, the Lord is King; your Lord and King adore;  
let all give thanks and sing, and triumph evermore;

#### *Refrain*

Lift up your heart, lift up your voice.  
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Jesus the Saviour reigns, the God of truth and love;  
when he had purged our stains, he took his seat above: [Refrain]

His kingdom cannot fail, he rules o'er earth and heaven;  
the keys of death and hell are to our Jesus given: [Refrain]

He sits at God's right hand, till all his foes submit,  
and bow to his command, and fall beneath his feet: [Refrain]

Rejoice in glorious hope; Jesus the judge shall come,  
and take his servants up to their eternal home:  
We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;  
the trump of God shall sound, Rejoice!

### **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 John 3**

### **What would you say to Jesus?**

If you meet Jesus, just walking along the street, what would you say to him?

Andrew and John asked "where are you staying?" Nathanael asked "how do you know me?" Jews in the temple after Jesus cleared the courts asked "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

In Matthew's gospel, Satan asks "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." The Samaritan woman at the well asked "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?"

Many others asked him to heal them. What would you ask?

In today's gospel reading, Nicodemus says "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." Nicodemus seems sure that God is with Jesus, or that Jesus is from God.

He may have had some doubts, and meant the statement as a question, but Jesus takes it at face value, and responds with: "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." In effect, Jesus is saying, "OK - you say I'm from God, therefore you should believe what I say, and I'm saying you must be born again."

### **You must be born again**

Nicodemus wanted to believe this, but first he had to understand. What does Jesus mean by being born again?

Nicodemus points out that this cannot be physical rebirth, as we cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born, so it cannot be literal, in this sense. A fact, I am sure, for which all mothers of Christians are grateful!

It is obviously a 'spiritual rebirth.' Jesus said the Spirit gives birth to spirit. Since it is spiritual, and not physical, we cannot see physical evidence of it. Like the wind you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

American Christians in particular use 'born again' as code for 'serious Christian' but we don't use the term much in Australia. The Bible mentions being born again three times: twice in our gospel this morning, and once in our New testament reading. In each case, it equates being born again with being saved: Jesus tells us in John's gospel that no one sees the kingdom of God without being born again, and 1 Peter tells us that all Christians have been born again, of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

So, while you will not hear me say this often, I think the Americans are right - all Christians are 'born again'. You cannot be a Christian without being born again, and if you are born again, you are a Christian.

### **The Bronze Snake**

Jesus explains why Nicodemus does not understand these things because they are heavenly and not earthly things, he gives the strange illustration of Moses lifting up a snake in the wilderness. In order to understand this, you have to know your Old Testament, and in particular the reading we read this morning from Numbers 21. Essentially what had been happening in the desert after they had escaped from slavery in Egypt was that the Israelites grumbled against God - they complained about the food and the water, and made it clear that they thought God had only brought them there to die. God sent venomous snakes into the camp to punish them, and when they confessed and repented, God instructed Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole, which anyone who had been bitten could look at and be healed.

Jesus says that this is a picture of what will happen to him - he would be lifted up like the bronze snake, except on the cross, and all who believed, that is looked to him for salvation would live - would gain eternal life.

### **John 3:16**

This brings us to the most famous verse in the Bible: John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.



This verse touches on so much of the gospel that I can't really give it justice in this, or any one sermon, but there are a few points that are worth special attention.

Firstly: God loved the whole world - not just Israelites who had been bitten by snakes, but everyone.

Secondly, he gave his only Son. If there was any doubt in Nicodemus's mind that Jesus was talking himself - Jesus said God gave himself - in the same way that Nicodemus had said that Jesus had come from God. And since Jesus is the one and only Son, he must be unique. Others may be considered 'Sons of God', but only Jesus is the one and only Son.

Thirdly, I previously said that believing in Jesus is looking to him for salvation. It isn't just a cognitive recognition that Jesus existed, or even that he is divine. It is trust and belief that Jesus is the source of eternal life.

And finally, since Jesus is the source of eternal life, all who believe in him will not really perish, but be raised with Jesus to eternal life.

Perhaps, like me, you were thinking that we wouldn't need saving if God were not condemning us, punishing us as he punished the Israelites in the wilderness. BUT Jesus is quite clear that Jesus didn't come to condemn, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. That is, they condemn themselves.

He goes on to explain: This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

## **Conclusion**

So this brings us back to where we started. If you were to meet Jesus today, what would you say to him?

Many today would want to ask Jesus "Have I been good enough to go to heaven?"

Others will ask "What must I do to gain eternal life"

These people haven't understood Jesus's message. You cannot be good enough, you cannot do anything to gain eternal life.

We can only gain eternal life by living by the truth, believing in Jesus and trusting in him for salvation. This is how we come into the light. Perhaps the right question to ask is the question Andrew and the other disciple asked Jesus "Where are you staying? Can I come and stay with you?"

With many encounters that Jesus had in his ministry, apart from the disciples, we often don't hear from the people again. Nicodemus was an exception. We were told in our gospel reading this morning that he was a member of the Jewish ruling council. Later in Jesus's ministry, in John Chapter 7, we see Nicodemus at work in the council, defending Jesus and at least trying to get him a proper hearing, and later in Chapter 20, where Nicodemus helps Joseph of Arimathea bury Jesus's crucified body in the tomb.

After his first encounter with Jesus, It seems Nicodemus had continued to follow Jesus. I am sure he had many more questions after his first conversation with Jesus, and probably didn't understand what Jesus meant about being lifted up like the snake until he witnessed Jesus being crucified, and about being born again of the Spirit until the Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost, or even eternal life until his own physical death when I believe he rose again to Jesus's side.

From asking how all these things could be when he first met Jesus, Nicodemus came to truly understand, and truly believe how **God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, Jesus, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

What question will you ask Jesus? Do you believe?