

SUNDAY 25 January 2026 - St Paul's Cooma 9.30am

Introduction

Hymn - TIS 135 - All things bright and beautiful

Chorus

**All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful—the Lord God made them all.**

**The wildflowers in their beauty, the mountain ranges tall,
the billabongs and rivers, and friendly birds that call *Chorus***

**The cold wind in the winter, the bright, life-giving sun,
the ripe fruits in the garden—he made them everyone. *Chorus***

**The coloured walls of gorges, the gum trees green and tall,
the rocks, and pools, and palm trees, the sparkling waterfall, *Chorus***

**The many-coloured corals, the creatures of the sea,
of bushland, field or desert, on farms, or roaming free, *Chorus***

**He gave us eyes to see them, and lips that we might tell
how great is God Almighty who has made all things well. *Chorus***

Greeting

Blessed be God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. **And also with you.**

Sentence of the day

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10

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.'

Prayer of the Day

Loving God, the light of the minds that know you, the life of the souls that love you; and the strength of the hearts that serve you; help us so to know you that we may truly love you; and so to love you that we may faithfully serve you, whose service is perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, 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 34:11-16 (NIV)

¹¹ “For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. ¹² As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. ¹³ I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. ¹⁴ I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁶ I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

Psalm 34:1-14 (NIV)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Romans 10:5-13 (NIV)

^{5.1} Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.” ⁶ But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: ⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile —the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

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

John 9:35 - 10:13(NIV)

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

³⁶ “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”

³⁷ Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

³⁸ Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

³⁹ Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”

⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?”

⁴¹ Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains. ¹Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” ⁶ Jesus

used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

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

Sermon - Good and Bad Shepherds

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God the Father, 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.

Prayers

Let us pray for the world and the church.

Response: God of Peace, 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.

Prayer of Preparation

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.

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 668 - Touch the earth lightly

Touch the earth lightly, Use the earth gently
Nourish the life of the world in our care
Gift of great wonder, Ours to surrender
Trust for the children tomorrow will bear

We who endanger, Who create hunger
Agents of death for all creatures that live
We who would foster, Clouds of disaster
God of our planet forestall and forgive

Let there be greening, Birth from the burning
Water that blesses and air that is sweet
Health in God's garden, Hope in God's children
Regeneration that peace will complete

God of all living, God of all loving

God of the seedling the snow and the sun
Teach us deflect us, Christ reconnect us
Using us gently and making us one

The 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.**
Loving God, we thank you for this world of wonder and delight. You have given it to us to care for, so that all your creatures may enjoy its bounty.
Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

We thank you that when we turned away from you, you sent Jesus to live and work as one of us, and bring us back to you. He showed us how to love you and set us free to love and serve one another.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**
We thank you that on the cross Jesus took away our sin, all that keeps us from each other and from you. He frees us from hate and fear, from all that destroys love and trust. Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

And so with everyone who believes in you, with all the saints and angels, we rejoice and 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 we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine; may we who receive them, as Jesus said, share his body and his blood.

On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and gave you thanks. He broke the bread and gave it to his friends, and said, 'Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper he took the cup and gave you thanks. He shared the cup with them and said, 'This is my blood poured out so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

You have gathered us together to feed on Christ and to remember all he has done for us. Fill us with your Spirit that we may follow Jesus in all we do and say, working for justice and bringing your peace to this world that you have made. Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen

We who are many are one body, **for we all share in the one bread.**

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.

After Communion

Father of all we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.

Keep us in this hope that we have grasped: so we and all your people will be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name.

Hymn - TIS 672 - Lord of earth and all creation

**Lord of earth and all creation, Let your love possess our land:
Wealth, and freedom, far horizons, Mountain, forest, shining sand:
May we share, in faith and friendship, Gifts unmeasured from your hand.**

**People of the ancient Dreamtime, They who found this country first,
Ask with those, the later comers, Will our dream be blessed or cursed?
Grant us, Lord, new birth, new living, Hope for which our children thirst.**

**Lord, life-giving healing Spirit, On our hurts your mercy shower;
Lead us by your inward dwelling, Guiding, guarding, every hour.
Bless and keep our land Australia: In your will her peace and power.**

Notices

Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the love of God, and the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you always **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Sermon John 9:35-10:21 Good and Bad Shepherds

Last week we heard how Jesus put mud on a blind man's eyes, told him to wash it off in the creek, and basically left him to it. It worked, and he could now see, but as a consequence, the Pharisees had given him and his family the third degree, and threw him out. Because the Pharisees held authority within the synagogue, this throwing out probably wasn't just telling the man to go away, but tantamount to excommunication, expulsion from the synagogue, and hugely serious with regards to his salvation in the man's mind.

This week starts with Jesus intentionally going to find the man. Given his dramatic healing and then treatment by the Pharisees, the man was probably quite confused and dejected. But, despite this, he didn't go searching for the one who had healed him. Instead, Jesus came searching for him. This is significant, as it is not us looking for God, but God is looking for us. It reminds me of the parable of the shepherd who left the 99 sheep to search for the one sheep that was lost. However, we'll come back to this idea of Jesus being the shepherd in just a moment when we look at chapter 10.

Getting back to the once blind man's response to Jesus, did you notice what happened when he came to understand who Jesus was? The man confesses "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped Jesus." The man who had just been thrown out of the Jewish synagogue is now worshipping the Son of Man as his Lord. As Paul describes it in our reading from Romans, He declared with his mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believed in his heart. And, although historically it was a bit soon for him to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, I am sure that he is saved. Foreshadowing the image of Jesus the Good Shepherd, the once blind man joined the Good Shepherd's flock. However, before we look at the Good Shepherd who we too must follow, I want to look at the false shepherds, like the Pharisees, that we mustn't follow.

Bad shepherds

Jesus has a lot to say about false shepherds. In this passage he was most likely referring to the Pharisees who were before him, but he also talks about false teachers that are trying to lead our churches today. We should never think that our church is immune from false teachers, and we should test any one who aspires to teaching roles in the church against the criteria Jesus specifies. I hope that you are also testing my teaching, keeping me to account that I faithfully teach God word, and questioning me if I have a different message.

The first thing Jesus says about false teachers, is "If they were blind, they would not be guilty of sin; but now that they claim they can see, their guilt remains." False teachers claim to know and preach God's word, so when they preach something else they must be culpable. People who humbly recognise that their knowledge of scripture is only developing but are striving to learn and to encourage congregations to read their Bible for themselves and to always test what they say against it, can make mistakes. This is understandable, if not ideal. However, if a teacher sets themselves as the authority over scripture, either claiming that their interpretation of God's word cannot be questioned, or that their teaching has greater authority than God's word, then they are a false teacher and guilty of grave sin. Such teachers should not be listened to, even if that means that they should be deposed, or that you leave that church. Certainly do not join a church with leadership like that!

Jesus then says that false shepherds don't enter the sheepfold by the gate. They enter illegitimately, by some other means. Since he also says that he is the gate, false shepherds do not enter via him, they don't preach his gospel or they seek authority by intimidation, as the Pharisees did by casting out those they didn't agree with. Jesus says that sheep will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away

from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice. True Christians recognise true teaching because it points to Jesus, but not false teaching that doesn't point to Jesus and isn't from God's word. True Christians will not follow it, even if others who are not of Jesus's flock do.

False teachers, like the Pharisees are thieves that come only to steal and kill and destroy. They seek to steal Christians away from true teachers, taking away the true life they have in Christ and destroying true teachers and their true message of eternal life through faith. The Pharisees did this by trying to condemn Jesus with their false accusations that he broke the Sabbath, and threatening his followers with expulsion from the synagogue. Modern false teachers similarly seek to destroy godly teachers to steal their congregations and bring about their spiritual death.

Jesus also compares false teachers to hired hands. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. When he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away, and the wolf attacks and scatters the flock. Hired hands run away because they care nothing for the sheep. We often see false teachers in their true character when times get hard. A true teacher is committed to the sheep under their care, for better or worse as in a marriage relationship. False teachers run away in hard times because they are committed to themselves, their self preservation, and their own hip pockets. They don't hang around when these are threatened because they don't really care for their congregations.

Good shepherds

Jesus says that he, and by implication his faithful under shepherds, the true teachers, are the opposite to these false teachers.

True teachers enter by the gate, by Jesus Christ. They lead by teaching Jesus crucified, the true gospel and the sheep

listen to his voice and follow him where he leads. True teachers lead God's people by going ahead of them, by themselves living the way God wants them to live, setting an example for their flocks. For good teachers it is never a case of 'do as I say, not as I do'. They go ahead of their flocks. The true teacher leads his flock through the gate to pasture, to find good nourishment, to have life and to have it to the full.

Ultimately true teachers lead their flocks to Christ and to live in Christ, the true shepherd, who laid down his life for his sheep that they would have life, true life and have it to the full. That they would have eternal life in perfect relationship with God, humankind and creation. Jesus laid down his life by dying on the cross that his flock might be saved, and rose again that they would have eternal life.

True teachers lead us into this eternal life through Christ and, as our new testament reading from Romans told us, and the blind man modelled for us, to declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, that then you will be saved." It is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame."

As true teachers preach this, and go ahead of their congregations, faithfully modelling this, so they, and their congregations will be saved as in the flock of the good shepherd, Jesus Christ. They will never be put to shame.

And now let us, as members of the flock of the Good Shepherd, confess with our mouths that we truly believe that Jesus is Lord, in the words of the Apostle's creed .