

Sunday 18 October 2026 Cooma Anglican HC 3

Hymn: TIS 111 - Praise to the Lord, the almighty, the king of creation

**Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation;
O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation.
Come all who hear, brothers and sisters draw near,
praise him in glad adoration.**

**Praise to the Lord who in all things is wondrously reigning
and, as on wings of an eagle, uplifting, sustaining:
have you not seen, all that is needed has been
sent by his gracious ordaining?**

**Praise to the Lord, who will prosper our work and defend us;
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend us:
ponder anew, what the Almighty can do
as with his love he befriends us.**

**Praise to the Lord, who when darkness of sin is abounding,
who, when the godless do triumph, our best hopes confounding.
sheds forth his light, scatters the horrors of night,
saints with his mercy surrounding.**

**Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him.
Let the Amen, sound from his people again:
gladly for ever adore him.**

Sentence of Scripture

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. Revelation 6:12-13

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

Almighty God, your Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence; give us pure hearts and steadfast wills to worship you in spirit and truth through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Isaiah 54:9-14 (NIV)

⁹ “To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. ¹⁰ Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

¹¹ “Afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with lapis lazuli. ¹² I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones. ¹³ All your children will be taught by the LORD, and great will be their peace. ¹⁴ In righteousness you will be established: Tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear. Terror will be far removed; it will not come near you.

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

Psalms 97 (NIV)

¹ The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice.

² **Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.**

³ Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side.

⁴ **His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles.**

⁵ The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth.

⁶ **The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all peoples see his glory.**

⁷ All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols — worship him, all you gods!

⁸ Zion hears and rejoices and the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments, LORD.

⁹ For you, LORD, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.

¹⁰ Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

¹¹ Light shines on the righteous and joy on the upright in heart.

¹² Rejoice in the LORD, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.

Revelation 6 (NIV)

¹ I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" ² I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

³ When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" ⁴ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.

⁵ When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "Two pounds of wheat for a day's wages, and six pounds of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"

⁷ When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" ⁸ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.

¹² I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, ¹³ and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴ The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" ¹⁷ For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"

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

Mark 13:32-37(NIV)

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

³² "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴ It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

³⁵ "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"

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

Sermon - Revelation 6 - Opening the Seals

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 of 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 fully 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 and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped 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

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 is slow to anger and full of compassion, forgiving all who humbly repent and trust in his Son as Saviour and Lord. God therefore forgives you in Christ Jesus, in whom there is no condemnation. **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 647 - Be thou my vision

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one

Be thou my armour, my sword for the fight,
be thou my dignity, thou my delight
thou my souls shelter and thou my high tower
raise thou me heavenward, my treasure thou art.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

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 658 - Here I am Lord

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin, My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them? Whom shall I send?

Chorus Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?
 I have heard You calling in the night.
 I will go Lord, if You lead me.
 I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have born my peoples pain.
I have wept for love of them, They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them, Whom shall I send? [Chorus]

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them, My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide, Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them, Whom shall I send? [Chorus]

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 - Revelation 6 - Opening the Seals

Welcome to my last sermon at St Paul's, at least for now. Only God knows what will happen in the future, and I'll certainly do my best to help out if I'm invited. I wasn't sure when I wrote this sermon whether I would write a special 'farewell' sermon, or just continue working my way through Revelation. Revelation won out. I've done this because reading the whole Bible systematically is important. Every word in God's word is important, and just picking the bits I think are interesting, or even letting the lectionary writers pick the bits that they think are important potentially means missing bits that God wants you to hear, and does not fully honour his word.

That said, we are up to chapter 6 of the book of Revelation and it deals with opening 6 of the seven seals on the scroll in God's right hand. The seventh and final seal is not actually opened until chapter 8, and so you will have to keep reading for yourself until that happens, our pester Mike to preach on it when he gets here.

Anyway, let's look at revelation 6. You should recall that last week I said that the scroll that God held in his right hand contained his plans that are to be fulfilled throughout the rest of history. Only Jesus, the lion of Judah, the Lamb who was slain and rose again is worthy to open the seven seals on the scroll, and six of the seals are opened in this chapter. As each one is opened, John hears something, like one of the creatures calling 'Come', and then John sees something happening in history. Today I want to consider what John hears and sees, and then consider what they mean collectively.

So, after the first seal is opened, John hears one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" When he looked, there before him was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

Scholars have argued about who the rider of this white horse is. Some think it is Jesus because chapter 19 tells of another rider of a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True, and is obviously Jesus. So it is not unreasonable that the rider of the white horse here is also Jesus. If it is, then, after he is given a crown, which would correspond to his sacrificial death, resurrection and ascension to heaven, he rides off as a conqueror bent on conquest, corresponding to the gospel moving throughout the world, winning souls for Jesus. This is an entirely reasonable interpretation, and it is entirely true in that the gospel is moving out into the world and people are being won for Christ.

However, most of the scholars I have read, and my own thoughts, are that the rider represents human, or possibly satanic conquerors who gain some level of authority or crown and then seek political or spiritual conquest, in some cases dressing themselves in figurative white robes, as agents of light not of darkness. Think of the Caesars, Charlemagne, Genghis Khan, Saladin, and even Hitler and other national leaders

growing their own empires throughout the world, with Muslim, Mormon, and the various cults and their leaders. John could also be referring to these, and to me they seem more consistent with the activities described in the opening of the first and later seals than Jesus does. Whichever you think, Jesus or other conquerors, I won't break fellowship with you over it.

When the second seal is opened, a fiery red horse comes, and its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword. This represents war in the world, as there has always been, since the time of Cain and Abel to the more than 110 recognised and conflicts in the world today. Forever people have used violence and killed each other rather than express God's love to achieve their own selfish ends, and John sees this with the blood red horse and its rider.

The third seal takes a little more interpreting. When it is opened, John sees a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "Two pounds of wheat for a day's wages, and six pounds of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!" You might think that the scales represent judgement, people being judged as in a city of law, but it is more likely measuring of food, and exorbitant food at that. Two pounds, one kilo of wheat, or even 3 kilos of chapter barley flour for a whole family doesn't stretch far when that is all it buys. And, like today, the poor will be affected most. The expensive food that only the rich bought, the oil and the wine are not affected. Like today, the cost of living will especially affect the poor who will take a hard hit.

The fourth seal brings a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth. The fourth seal brings death, and death to a full quarter of the earth's population, deaths caused through human action, by wild beasts and through natural causes, famines and plagues.

This brings us to the end of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, a group I am sure you have heard from popular literature. John saw riders on white, red, black and pale horses representing conquest, war, famine and death, and now we have two seals to go today.

Seal five sees the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained, under the altar ¹⁰ They call out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Christians are martyred, killed for their faith in God's word and for faithfully sharing that faith. John sees them under God's altar, crying out to God to judge their murderers. The martyrs are given white robes and told to wait a little longer, to be patient as it is not yet the time for their deaths to be avenged. As

harsh as it seems, there is a full number of fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, who are to be killed just as they had been before God brings about their final judgement.

And then we then come to the penultimate seal, and the last we will look at today. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, 13 and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. 14 The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. The sixth seal brings disruption on a cosmic scale, an earthquake, darkened sun, red moon, meteors, rearrangements of the heavens and the earth's geography. God allows this judgement on the cosmos, and this time it won't just affect the poor and the disadvantaged like the third sea. With the sixth seal, the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hide in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. Everyone is affected and they call to the mountains and the rocks to fall on them, because even that is preferable to God's judgement. They are trying to hide from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! Trying, but this is not possible! When the great day of God's wrath comes, who can withstand it?"

In summary, opening these six seals represent things that will occur before the end of history, things that are all part of God's plan. There will be conquest, war, impoverishment, death, martyrdom and disruption of the cosmos. These things will happen, they are parts of God's unfolding plan, but how are we to understand them? Some people think the events are specific events, and once the right ones happen, then the final day will come about pretty well straight away. Maybe the events will happen in the order of the seals, or maybe they won't, but the problem is the impossibility of identifying actual events with the events prophesied. That there have always been wars, there has always been conquest, always been martyrdom, impoverishment, death and, at least to a degree, disruption of the cosmos, with eclipses and comets and the like. These things have and will happen, but how could we identify the right specific ones?

A better way to understand that these things are all parts of God's plan, they are allowed by God, and they happen to show that God is sovereign. It may seem harsh that he even lets these things happen, but ultimately they are his judgements on a humanity that rejects him, that rejects the very God that created the universe good and had given those who put their faith in him their very life, and eternal life in absolute paradise.

Another way to understand these events is to see that they are always happening, and the final days, the days when Jesus returns and brings the final judgement can happen any time now. All the events that are prophesied to happen first have indeed

already happened. We have no excuse to be like the foolish virgins who missed out on the marriage feast because they weren't ready. As our gospel reading from Mark tells us, we are to be on guard, we are to be alert, and we are not to be found sleeping. Jesus is returning to judge the whole earth, the evidence is all around us in the events prophesied with the opening of the seals, and we have no excuse.

As I said when I started today, you will have to keep reading Revelation for yourselves to see what happens when the seventh and final seal is open, or you will have to pester Mike to preach about it. Without giving too much of a spoiler, Revelation is not just about judgment, it is also about eternal salvation and blessings for those who recognise the signs and are ready for the seals being opened.

My prayer is that you will all recognise the signs, and that we are all prepared and are ready for the opening of the final, seventh seal of God's plan for history. That has been my goal for you since I started ministering in Cooma three years ago, and that will be my goal for those I minister to in the future, whether it is just my family, or whether it will be in congregations in Cairns or in the wide Canberra Goulburn diocese.

Will you demonstrate the fulfilment of that goal of mine amongst you when the seventh seal is opened and Jesus returns? That is my earnest prayer. Amen