

Sunday 9 June 2024 HC 2.1

Hymn - Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, your great name we praise.

Unresting, Unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, but ruling in might;
Your justice like mountains high soaring above
your clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

You give life to all Lord, to both great and small,
in all life now living, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish as leaves on a tree,
and wither and perish, but ever unchanged you will be.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
your angels adore you, all veiling their sight;
of all your rich graces this grace Lord impart
take the veil from our faces, the veil from our heart.

All praise we would render reveal to our sight;
what hides you is only the splendour of light
and so let your glory, Almighty, impart
through Christ is the story, your Christ to the heart

The Grace

of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you.
And also with you.

'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

Jesus said: 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

Lord have mercy on us, and write your law in our hearts by your Holy Spirit.

Sentence of the Day

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

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

O God, Your hand is upon your people, to guide and protect them through the ages. Keep in your service those you have called and anointed, that the powers of this world may not overwhelm us, but that, secure in your love, we may carry out your will in the face of all adversity. **Amen.**

Isaiah 65:8–12

⁸ This is what the LORD says: “As when juice is still found in a cluster of grapes and people say, ‘Don’t destroy it, there is still a blessing in it,’ so will I do in behalf of my servants; I will not destroy them all. ⁹ I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah those who will possess my mountains; my chosen people will inherit them, and there will my servants live. ¹⁰ Sharon will become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds, for my people who seek me. ¹¹ “But as for you who forsake the LORD and forget my holy mountain, who spread a table for Fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny, ¹² I will destine you for the sword, and all of you will fall in the slaughter; for I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen. You did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me.”

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

Psalms 103:1-12

¹ Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

² **Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—**

³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

⁴ **who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,**

⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

⁶ **The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.**

⁷ He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel:

⁸ **The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.**

⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;

¹⁰ **he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.**

¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;

¹² **as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.**

Ephesians 2:1-22

^{2.1} As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. ¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them

to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

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

John 5:19-30

¹⁹ Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. ²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ²² Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. ²⁴ "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. ²⁵ Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. ³⁰ By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

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

Sermon - Ephesians 2: Near or Far, Foreigners or Citizens

Question Time

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

Let us pray for the world and the church

Response: Christ Jesus, intercede for us, and 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

Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one, so that your Father who is in heaven may forgive your trespasses. Mark 11:25

Prayer of Approach

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

The Confession

The Spirit of truth comes to convict us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement. Let us open our hearts and 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 - Holy Spirit, come confirm us

**O breath of life, come sweeping through us,
revive your church with life and power;
O breath of life, come cleanse, renew us,
and fit your church to meet this hour.**

**O wind of God, come bend us, break us,
till humbly we confess our need;
then in your tenderness remake us,
revive, restore: for this we plead.**

**O breath of love, come breathe within us,
renewing thought and will and heart;
come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,
revive your church in every part.**

**Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating
while harvest fields are vast and white?
Revive us, Lord, the world is waiting,
equip your church to spread the light.**

Thanksgiving for Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

Blessed be God for ever.

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty Creator, everliving God.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us. By his death on the cross, he offered the one true sacrifice for sin, and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.

Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Merciful God, we thank you for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine, and we pray that by your Word and Holy Spirit, we who eat and drink them may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread; and when he had given you thanks he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples, saying, Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

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

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded: proclaiming his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming again, we celebrate, with this bread and this cup, his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Renew us by your Holy Spirit, unite us in the body of your Son and bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, and in whom, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father, in songs of never-ending praise:

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

The Holy Communion

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one bread: so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

The gifts of God for the people of God

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

The Lord's Supper is open to all who love the Lord. Grape juice is available.

Please come to the Communion Rail if you are able, observing appropriate social distancing.

After Communion

Gracious God, we thank you that in this sacrament you assure us of your goodness and love. Accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and help us to grow in love and obedience that we may serve you in the world and finally be brought to that table where all your saints feast with you for ever.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen

Notices

Hymn - Come, Holy Spirit

Lord of creation, to you be all praise!
Most mighty your working, most wondrous your ways!
Your glory and might are beyond us to tell,
And yet in the heart of the humble you dwell.

Lord of all power, I give you my will,
In joyful obedience your tasks to fulfil.
Your bondage is freedom; your service is song;
And, held in your keeping, my weakness is strong.

Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,
Rich truth that surpasses our knowledge to find;
What eye has not seen and what ear has not heard
Is taught by your Spirit and shines from your word.

Lord of the bounty, I give you my heart;
I praise and adore you for all you impart,
Your love to inspire me, your counsel to guide,
Your presence to shield me, whatever betide.

Lord of all being, I give you my all;
If ever I leave you, I stumble and fall;
But, led in your service your word to obey.
I'll walk in your freedom to the end of the way.

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 - Ephesians 2 - Dead or Alive, Far or Near, Foreigner or Citizen?

Introduction

Last sermon I talked about how we are chosen by God to be Christian, that is, for salvation. Ephesians 1 talks about our being chosen in terms of being forgiven, adopted, receiving the Holy Spirit and understanding God's mysteries. This week, Ephesians 2 gives a before and after view of becoming a Christian, and talks about it in three ways: moving from being spiritually dead in sin to being alive in Christ, from being far away from God to being brought near by the blood of Christ, and from being foreigners to being fellow citizens with God's people.

Foreigner or Citizen

I want to start with the last one, moving from being foreigners to being fellow citizens with God's people.

Citizenship has been a big issue in Australia for the last few years. We have argued about whether we can cancel the Australian citizenships of dual nationals who were convicted of terrorism, we discovered our constitution didn't allow dual citizens to sit in parliament, and we decided we could prevent Australian citizens coming back to Australia during COVID and we deported people without Australian citizenship when if they were convicted of serious crimes, even if they had been in Australia most of their lives. In general, the benefits entailed by Australian citizenship have been examined far more than they have been since it was inaugurated in 1949. Prior to that, Australians were British Citizens.

In God's plan, most of us don't have Jewish ancestry, and so are not citizens of Israel, and are called gentiles. Paul tells us that gentiles were separated from God on 2 counts. Like everyone, including Jews, gentiles were estranged from God by sin, and like every other gentile, we were not members of God's chosen people Israel. Because God had only chosen Israel to be his special people as the first part of his plan of salvation, Paul said that prior to Jesus, gentiles were without God and without hope.

Consequently, before he could call us into God's people, Jesus had to dismantle the things that separated gentiles from Jews.

The things that separated Jews from gentiles were the law with its commands and regulations, and symbolically, circumcision. It was well known that all Jewish males were circumcised when they were eight days old, and this became the defining feature of Jews. Paul says that Jesus set aside all these differences, the law and circumcision, by dying for us on the cross. This essentially made Jews and gentiles into a single humanity. On the cross, Jesus took away the differences that caused hostility between Jew and gentile, and allowed

there to be peace between the nations, allowing gentiles to gain access to God, whom only the Jews had had access previously. Consequently, through Christ, we gentiles no longer have to be foreigners and strangers, but can be fellow citizens with God's people and actually members of God's household.

Near or Far

Ephesians also tells us that Jesus came and preached this peace (that is, the removal of differences between Jew and gentile) to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. So not only did Jesus nullify the differences, he proactively proclaimed it to the gentiles as well as to the Jews. You may have noticed in the gospels that Jesus says a number of times that his primary mission was to the Jews, and like me were surprised how often he was speaking to and healing gentiles despite this. When we were looking at the gospel of Mark Jesus seemed to be crossing backwards and forwards between the Jewish and gentile sides of the lake, and sometimes apparently ignoring Jews to talk to gentiles.

In Old Testament times, the gentiles were considered far away from God, but Jesus brought them near. No longer were God's special people only the Jews whose ancestor Jacob had been chosen by God, had been rescued from slavery in Egypt, given the promised land that had been Canaan, and given God's law and were able to meet with God in the temple in Jerusalem. Now Jesus had reconciled all people, Jew and gentile, to God through the cross, and so through him, all could come close to God.

Spiritually Dead or Alive

When Jesus broke down the citizenship barrier, and brought everyone gentiles as well as Jews near to himself, everyone was still spiritually dead in their sin. You might be Jewish or gentile, but sin still stood between you and God. Ephesians says we all followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, that is, Satan. He calls this being dead in our sin, or spiritually dead.

As we heard in my series on the gospel, sin is rebellion against God, or as I mentioned, putting I the centre of my life rather than God. Sin also brought death into the world, and as Adam and Eve learnt the hard way, all who sinned were subject to death and would eventually die. Paul calls this sinning and being subject to death "spiritual death." Everyone, Jew or gentile, is in spiritual death in this world, no matter how hard we try to please God.

Also, we could not be part of God's people when we were spiritually dead, and Jesus also had to do something about this. Ephesians tells us that *because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in those transgressions and sins.*

Saved by Grace

This is another way of saying that it is by grace you have been saved. In the same way that God did not choose the nation of Israel because of anything they had done, or because they were more impressive than any other nation, so God did not choose us not because of anything good we have done. Later, in verse 8 and 9, Paul really emphasises this point: He says it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

I like to think of grace as 'unmerited favour' - getting something we don't deserve. Because of sin, we actually deserve judgement, but because of grace, we get eternal life and a perfect relationship with God which we do not deserve. It is kind of the opposite of mercy, which is us not getting something we do deserve. In his mercy, God does not punish those in Christ for their sins as we deserve, and in his grace, he gives us the eternal life we do not deserve because of our sins.

Conclusion

So, in conclusion, before Christ, we were far away from God, foreigners to God's kingdom and spiritually dead in our sins. By coming as a human into this world, Jesus, on the cross, allowed us to be brought close to God, citizens of God's kingdom, and alive in Him.

Jesus didn't do any of these things because of anything we had done, but by grace. We don't deserve grace, that is the very definition of grace, but *because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in those transgressions and sins.*

God loves us, and he saved us, long before we even tried to do anything to deserve that salvation.

Amen