

## Sunday June 21, 2020

### Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

#### Welcome & Prayer (Tom B)

Good morning everyone and welcome to Charlestown Presbyterian, in whatever capacity you might be joining with our church family. In times of turmoil, as in times of peace, it is a comfort to know that our rock, our Lord and Saviour Jesus, God's anointed, is with us. As God's people, it is a wonderful blessing to be able to have such ready access to him. We trust that the service this morning enables you to appreciate that blessing as you come to the Lord.

For so long, we have lived in a society where choice is abundant. Our society offers many choices about the career we might pursue, the car we might buy, the shoes we might wear, the food we might eat, the church we might attend. However, even with abundant choice, there are always restrictions. Money, convenience, proximity, talent and personal morality all restrict us from certain choices at different times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an interesting insight into what happens when restrictions repress the choices we are used to having. We could no longer choose how we go to church. The shoes we wanted came weeks later than usual, if they arrived at all, and that was only if we shopped online. Food – and of course, toilet paper – was harder to access. Careers were put on hold and some ceased entirely. Everyone stopped using their cars.

And people didn't like it.

Today, Jon is going to talk about a choice that is available to each of us, a choice that we all get to make, one way or another. Unlike so many others, this choice can be made regardless of the pandemic. And if we didn't like the loss of choice throughout COVID-19, it is nothing compared to the ramifications if we make the wrong choice when confronted with the options Jon will outline during the sermon.

Let's spend a moment in prayer as we come to worship.

Our Heavenly Father, we praise you for the world you made. And we thank you that you have given us the freedom to make choices since the beginning. Sadly Lord, when given this freedom we have too often made the wrong choice. Starting with Adam and Eve in the Garden, mankind has shown a propensity to make poor choices as we have sought to take control of our lives and to reject your leading. And in all of our lives, that decision to rule ourselves has been the first in a litany of poor choices, each of which has separated us from you.

Yet you did not leave us to the filth we filled our lives with. While we continued to make our terrible choices, you provided a new plan, a new way to restore the relationship with you that we had ground into the mud. By sending Jesus, a man whose every choice honoured you, the one man who could remove our sin was brought into the world. And even in the garden of Gethsemane, where he asked you to take the cup from him, Jesus still chose the path of righteousness, the path that honoured the Father. And so he went to the cross and was killed by people who made terrible choices.

The miracle of resurrection proved your power over sin and death – and provided each of us the opportunity to make a choice. A choice on which path to take – the path of the world, which leads to sin and death, or the path of Jesus, which brings eternal life with you. Thank you for this choice and that many of us have accepted your gift of life already. And we ask that we will not take it for granted but will be thankful – so thankful that we will want to share this choice with others, that they might also be brought into your kingdom. And we pray for this in Jesus's name. Amen.

**Hymn of the Ages** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBBSQDRInQ4>

**To God Be the Glory** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukQajOmgDGk>

## Bible Reading - Psalm 1 (NIV)

1  
Blessed is the one  
    who does not walk in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take  
    or sit in the company of mockers,

2  
but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,  
    and who meditates on his law day and night.

3  
That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
    which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither—  
    whatever they do prospers.

4  
Not so the wicked!  
    They are like chaff  
    that the wind blows away.

5  
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
    nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6  
For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
    but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

## Matthew 7:13-14 (NIV)

13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

## Announcements

- **Church in June.** It is great news that all our services are back on a weekly basis even if at the moment they are restricted to just 50 people (Charlestown AM & Sunday @ 6) or 23 (Swansea). So far we have had 93 different people at Charlestown AM, 24 and 40 different people for Sunday @ 6 so we are well on track to get almost everyone to one of our services by the end of June. Please pray for us as a Church as we seek to connect physically after a long time of only being able to connect virtually.
- **Moving to 100 people.** Last week NSW announced that Church services could hold up to 100 people from 1<sup>st</sup> July but the 2 metre by 2 metre rule still applies. This unfortunately means that we cannot have more than 23 people at Swansea and 50 people at Charlestown.
- **Balance.** On Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June, Jo and Stephen are holding a ZOOM webinar on Balance. Are you finding it hard to balance work, home & Church? Then why not tune in between 3:00-4:30pm where we will have a combination of teaching, practical application and group discussion on the issue of balance. The zoom link details are...
- **Focus for June – Family.** Sometimes something good can become an idol and unfortunately for some people in Australia their families have become an idol. Their families have become more important than their relationship with God. This week it would be good for us ALL to all think – are we loving our families enough and are they missing out on the best of our time and effort? And are we loving our families too much that we are giving them the very best of our time and effort and not giving God the pre-eminence in everything? A mistake either way can be very costly. Please pray for our Church family as we ALL consider these questions this week.

- **Prayer.** Don't forget that every Monday and Thursday evenings at 7pm we are meeting to pray via ZOOM. Please join us.
- **Pastoral Care.** Are you in need of pastoral care? Or have awaiting a COVID-19 test or been diagnosed with COVID-19? Please let us know so that we can pray and provide any physical or spiritual help that you need.
  - After this service please like the sermon or share it with someone else or complete the following one minute Survey Monkey survey @ at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6D9VPZK> This will help us work out who is accessing our interactive service and how we can better help out those who are not.
- **Facebook.** Not part of our Church's facebook group at the moment? Then why not join us at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/563984673762656/>
- **Elevanto.** And while you are online please check out and update your Elevanto profile at the Church Elevanto page. This will help us greatly as a Church. And if you haven't signed up for Elevanto as yet, please contact Liz Hyslop on ([gehyslop@optusnet.com.au](mailto:gehyslop@optusnet.com.au)) and she will help you sign up.

### Prayer points – Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2020

**Pray for Uzbekistan (Pop 54 million, Christians 4.3m).** Churches are monitored, and extremists target church leaders in order to stop the church from growing. Christians usually meet in homes or business places because church land is often confiscated. Children of Christians face discrimination by teachers and bullying by other children. Most Christians are extremely poor, especially in rural areas. They can get stuck in the cycle of poverty due to ethnic and religious discrimination. They are denied education and employment opportunities. Some are even denied access to community water sources. Christians are harassed, threatened, and forced to leave their homes. Pray that those in poverty can find contentment in Jesus and become powerful witnesses to their families and community. Pray that the Holy Spirit will change the hearts of extremist groups and bring them to know Jesus.

**Black Lives Matter.** Pray for change so that all people are seen to be made in the image of God and so there is no difference based on colour or national background.

**COVID - 19.** Pray that the numbers will remain low in Australia and that we as a nation will reach out to countries that are not doing as well as we are and help them with medical equipment and resources.

**Pray for families.** That as we think through how we relate to both our physical family and our Church family that we all will get the balance right.

**Pray for Josh Montzka.** Praise God that he is healthy and enjoying physically going back to work. Pray for Josh' role in the Mid Year Conference in getting all the tech together. It is quite complex this year. Pray for the preparations for #HACK as he organises what digital projects the volunteers will be involved in this year

**Pray for our Church family.** That God will help us travel the path of faith together no matter what speed each one of us is going.

## Church Prayer (Jen Mulready)

Heavenly Father,

We bring you praise for the bible -that we can read it ourselves, and examine its claims, so we can hold it as a lens whilst we live in this world that does not know you as our Sovereign Lord. Please help us to wrestle with your word, that we may grow to know you more intimately and therefore shape our days so that we may honour you every moment we live on this earth. Grant to us a full understanding of the mercy you have shown, that we may know how wide and long, and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.

As our world holds out protest against long term discrimination and injustice within our societies, we pray that we would have the grace and humility to address past wrongs. That as a society we would recognise our own unconscious bias that has coloured our perspective over the years. We pray that the good and the bad be recognised. We know these things have not happened in a vacuum but also occurred within the context of the bible believing

church. We pray for change so that all people are seen to be made in the image of God and there is no difference based on skin colour or national background. We pray that the church would be seen as being genuine in its desire to see all people as equal in God's eyes, with the acknowledgment that we still live in this sinful, fallen world. We pray for safety as protests continue around the world.

We pray for our world as it wrestles with the realities of living with COVID-19. We thank you that the impact of illness of Covid 19 in Australia has been relatively low, please help our country to recognise that this is a good thing and not what is happening around the rest of the world. Please help our population to be wise in their interactions, to be discerning between their personal freedoms and that of our community especially if the spread of Covid 19 begins to increase again in Australia. We pray that as a nation we would reach out to other nations that are not doing so well and help with our resources.

We pray for our church family as life continues to be topsy turvey. Please help each individual/ family to travel the path of faith together, that we would work out the balance of quality time with competing realities of home, work/ school and church- help us to live life well in a way that reflects the deep knowledge of a Lord who loves us and that would be evident to others around us. Please help us to be mindful of not hunkering down too much that we forget our church families needs.

Thankyou for the ministry that Josh Montzka is involved with in Power to Change. We thankyou for his health and that he is enjoying the return back to a physical workplace. We continue to pray for wisdom and efficiency in his role in getting all the tech together for midyear conference as well as the continued complex preparations for the upcoming #HACK.

Finally we want to pray specifically for the nation of Uzbekistan with a population of 54 million but only about 4.3 million Christians. We pray for trust and perseverance for believers in Uzbekistan as they face severe monitoring by extremists. They face significant ethnic, social and financial discrimination often leading to systemic poverty. In the past couple of months during the COVID 19 pandemic Christians have been discriminated against and restricted from accessing everyday items such as food, water, medical supplies and money though supplies have been increased generally for those in poverty in Uzbekistan. We pray for justice and equality in the distribution of resources and pray that you will hold them firmly in your grasp.

We pray these things in your son Jesus's precious name .

Amen

## **Kids Spot! Quizworx**

### **Kids Song -**

In the Name of Jesus Christ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYpwISi1qN0&feature=youtu.be>

Watch the kids talk on You tube. This week we are learning about Saul:

Saul, who later became Paul, tried everything he could to stop Jesus' mission. Until he met the Risen King Jesus! In this Kids' Talk, Bubbles the puppet interviews Saul himself to find out how he went from being a leader of those against Jesus' mission to becoming one of the key leaders in the unstoppable mission of the Risen King Jesus. The Risen King Jesus changes people!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oC6M9sMFT\\_M&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oC6M9sMFT_M&feature=youtu.be)

**Your Word (Emu Music)** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gk9qDuAZtE>

**Sermon - *First Things First* (Psalm 1) by Jon Brown**

**Sermon Link -** <https://youtu.be/AthIAuuyyRg>

Today we are starting a five week series on Psalms 1-5. The last few months have caused a lot of uncertainty. The things we once trusted in such as our work, schools, transport, holidays, churches, have been shaken up. It all feels disorientating doesn't it. Where can we find confidence in troubled times? In the Psalms the Holy Spirit takes all life's grief, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, confusion, and instructs us to bring them before God in Christ. The Psalms help re-orientate us. They train us to pray. And not only that, they reshape our disordered loves so that we love what we ought to love, and hate what we ought to hate.

Psalm 1 is the first psalm for a reason. Together with Psalm 2 it acts as a doorway to the Psalter. Psalms 1 and 2 introduce us to the major twin themes of the Psalter: the destiny of the righteous and the wicked (Psalm 1), and the Lord's Anointed King (Psalm 2).

Psalm 1 puts first things first. It boils all the complexity of life down to two paths with two polar opposite ends. There is no more important question in life as 'Where are you heading?' Here we are told there are only two paths. And every person who has ever lived, or ever will live, is walking one of these two paths. And right now, you and I are on one of these two paths. You are either on the path which leads to eternal happiness with God. Or the path of judgment which leads to eternal ruin. Let's turn to Psalm 1 now and make sure we're heading in the right direction by contrasting these two ways to live.

### **The Way of the Righteous (vv. 1-3)**

Check out verse 1, "How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked, nor stand in the pathway of sinners, nor sit in the company of mockers." Everyone wants to find happiness don't they. Everyone is in pursuit of it. But not many people seem to find what they're looking for. Hence why there's so many books on how to be happy. If people had happiness they wouldn't need a book to tell them about what they already possessed!

The Bible has a surprising answer to where happiness is found. We see that in Jesus' Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12). And it's the same in this Psalm. "Blessed is the man", or "How happy is the person..." who does this or that? No, happiness is found not in doing but in not doing. The negative comes before the positive. Why? Because the Bible is addressing humans as fallen creatures. By nature we are prone to wander. Wander from whom or where? Wander from God. The God who made us for himself, and as Augustine said, "our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You." Happiness is only found in right relationship with God. If God made us then he knows how we tick. He knows how we can be truly happy. And God wants us to be happy. That's why he has given us this Psalm. Which starts with a warning: "WRONG WAY. GO BACK".

If you start down the wrong path you'll end up in the wrong place. There's a path you can take that will drag you down into misery. And it happens gradually with three steps in the wrong direction. Notice in verse 1? First you start walking in step with the wicked. Wicked is a strong word isn't it. Surely no one is wicked, deep down? But the wicked appear often in the Psalms and in the Proverbs too. They're men and women who have sold themselves to do evil. The whole direction of their life is against God. Veering off the path starts with listening to their advice. Where do you get your guidance from? From people who know and love God? Or people who don't have any time for God? The way you think will lead you to act in a certain way. And that's the next step. You go from walking to standing with sinners. You become more comfortable with doing the wrong thing. And before you know it, now you're sitting. Your allegiance has changed. The position is settled. The direction has changed your way of life. And before you know it you're the one leading others off the track. That's what mockers do.

The further you wander the further you go astray. Like Little Red Riding Hood. Remember her mother warned her, "when you're going through the woods, walk nicely and quietly and whatever you do, don't run off the path." But Little Red Riding Hood gets hood winked doesn't she. The wolf comes and meets her, and says, "Why are you sticking to the path? Look around you, there's a whole world out there." And Little Red Riding Hood falls for it. She sees a pretty flower far off and runs after it, and goes deeper and deeper into the dark woods.

Happy is the one who heeds the warning sign and turns back. The lesson here is that sin always leads to a downward spiral. Walking, standing, sitting. You might have heard of Ted Bundy. He was an infamous serial killer. And he was convicted of murdering over 30 women. In his last interview a doctor said to him, "What went wrong?" Ted goes on to say he had a good up bringing. Good Christian parents. No abuse. No violence. But one day when he was

about 12, Ted and some of his friends were out doing what kids usually do. And they came across some magazines in a service station. Pornographic magazines. That triggered something in Ted. It started with pictures. And the more Ted looked the more he wanted. He was sucked into a black hole. And soon pictures weren't enough. Dark thoughts became dark actions. Within a few years he had committed his first crime: sexual assault.

That's what this Psalm warns us about sin. The more you wander the further you go astray. And before long sin has a stranglehold on you. Has this happened to you? It can happen to anyone. You might be sitting here thinking, "Oh no! I've wandered off the path. This is me." How can we change direction?

Notice in verse 2. There's another guide. There's a road map that leads us in the right direction. "Instead the happy one delights in the Law of the Lord. And in this Law he meditates day and night." The Hebrew word for 'Law' or 'instruction' is Torah. The Torah is much broader than the Ten Commandments. It's the whole Bible. Many times in Scripture, it refers to Scripture as the Law of the Lord. Not just the didactic law but even the stories are for our instruction. We're supposed to take the whole Bible for our instruction. It's our road map. But we're not just meant to study it. Notice we're meant to meditate on it.

Richard Baxter was a 17th century British minister and writer. He almost died. He got very sick. And during that time he wrote a book, called the Saint's Everlasting Rest. And it's about mediation. He learnt to mediate on the Bible as he was dying. And it brought him an enormous amount of comfort. And he defines mediation in that book by saying, first of all it's fixing your mind a certain truth. And then it's speaking to your heart about it. It's taking the truths of the Bible and then pressing them into your heart. Until it catches fire. And notice you need to do it day and night. It's methodical isn't it. But it's not mechanical. Notice you're not just supposed to meditate on God's word, you're supposed to delight in it! How are you meant to delight in the Law of God? When I was younger, I used to be scared to read the Bible because every time I opened it, I was convicted. I wanted to go my own way. And when I read the Bible I was reminded I was heading in the wrong direction. That didn't delight me. The only way to delight in God's word is to fix your eyes on Jesus. Jesus is THE blessed man. He is the only one who didn't wander from God. Hebrews 10:7 tells us Jesus delighted to do God's will. That's why he came into the world. Jesus prayed day and night. He stayed on the narrow path and walked toward the cross. And there he died for evil people. He offered forgiveness to wicked sinner who mocked him. He meditated on the Scriptures so deeply, that it just came out of him. Even when he was dying. Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" On the cross, Jesus took the judgment that you and I deserve. That's how you come to delight in God's word. Jesus took the curse leaving us with nothing but blessing. He is the fulfilment of all of Scripture including Psalm 1. And when you are united to Jesus by faith, you get to share in all God's blessings.

Notice in verse 3? A Christian is like a tree that's planted by rivers of waters. A Christian is grafted into Christ, the True Vine. And the Holy Spirit is the flowing water. Flowing out of the Father and the Son. The source of all life and happiness. And the Spirit causes you to produce fruit. The fruits of the Spirit. And notice this tree is evergreen. It's leaf never withers. No matter if the sun is beating down or not. Rain, hail, or shine its green. No matter the season. Why? Because your happiness no longer depends on your circumstances. Your life is hid with Christ in God. This is the real prosperity gospel. Not that you get your best life now. But that your treasure is stored up in heaven with Jesus and nothing can take it away from you.

### **The Way of the Wicked (vv. 4-6)**

Now let's compare that with the way of the wicked. Check out in verse 4. "No not so with the wicked, instead they are like the chaff that the wind blows away." The wicked are drastically different aren't they. When you're not rooted in Jesus, you've got no roots. Like the chaff that the wind blows away. Like a dandelion that you pluck and blow, and it's gone. No roots. No certainty. No substance. Nothing but a superficial life. A life of emptiness. It's had all the good stuff taken out and is nothing but a husk. If you live your life without God this is where you'll wind up. All the life is sucked out of the person leaving nothing but a shell. That's heavy isn't it. It's serious stuff. It matters. It matters more than anything because your destiny is at stake. There's a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned. Your eternal destiny is at stake.

Jesus himself said in Matthew 7:13-14, there's only two paths. One leads to destruction, the other leads to life. Only two paths. Without Jesus you're on the road to ruin. Look in verse 5. "Therefore the wicked will not stand up in the judgment,, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous." There's a judgment coming. That's why it matters. Everyone must stand before the Judge. We all want justice don't we. Justice for George Floyd. That's what the Black Lives Matter protests are about aren't they. Thousands of people taking to the streets demanding justice. But as one

old preacher reminds us, “if you want the rubbish truck to come, you better get out the wheelie bin first!” We all want justice. Well God is just. And there’s a time coming when he will judge every person.

And if you’re not rooted in Christ, if you haven’t received Jesus, then you haven’t got a leg to stand on. You’re like chaff. And the end is ruin. Jesus said he’ll throw the chaff in the fire. The only way you can stand in the judgement is by repenting and believing in Jesus. When you do this his righteousness is given to you. God declares you righteous and you’re no longer under judgment. There’s no more important questions than “Which path are you on?” Don’t be like the lemmings. You know those small rodents that follow each other off the cliff. It’s not too late. Repent. Change direction!

Ted Bundy, at the end of that interview I mentioned earlier, was asked, “Is it true you have accepted forgiveness in Jesus Christ.” Ted said, “Yes!”. You’re never too far gone for Jesus to save you. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. And no one who calls on the name of the Lord will be put to shame. Only Jesus can save you from the judgment. Only Jesus can change your destiny. Wicked to righteous. Ungodly to godly. You’ve only got two options: ruined by sin or right with God. Everlasting disgrace or knowing God and being known by him. Check out verse 6, “The Lord knows the way of the righteous.” There’s great comfort here for a believer. All your ways are known to God. He is directing and leading you to everlasting life. He will keep you. God’s knowledge of you is loving. He sees all the twisted things about us. That not even your best friend knows. And he sees more bad stuff than you can see yourself. And he still loves you. And gave his Son to die for you. Now I don’t need to fear the judgment. I’m know by God and loved by him. If you can say that, you’re a happy Christian indeed!

**Come Thou Fount Of Every Blessing** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYrTqBiaZ4>

**Just A Closer Walk With Thee** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOKaircCiGI>

## Benediction.

24 To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— 25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

## Church Engagement

To help us know who has participated in today’s service would you please either

- Like the sermon on Facebook OR
- Share the sermon on Facebook with someone that you believe would benefit from it. OR
- Fill out a two question survey (approx. 1 minute) at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6D9VPZK>