

LENT 3 SUNDAY

20 MARCH 2022

CAVES BEACH

CALL TO WORSHIP (Based on Psalm 63 (1-8))

Lord, you are our God.

We will praise you with joyful lips.

Lord, you are our God.

Our souls thirst for you.

Lord, you are our God.

We behold your power and majesty.

Lord, you are our God.

We will bless you all of the days of our lives.

O God, you are our God.

We will ever praise you!

OPENING PRAYER

Gentle and loving God, our souls cling to you, like a newborn baby clings to its mother. Give us this day the Bread of life, that as we feast at your table, our souls may be filled with your praise, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HYMN – TIS 134 Praise My Soul the King of Heaven

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sx1eMwIDFb8>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Father God, we bow before you today very aware of your might and power and our own weaknesses. But you have allowed us to call you our God. How awesome!

Then as we read the scriptures we realize that your grace and mercy for people just like us is available for us to experience firsthand. Your own son Jesus came into this world and lived a life like one of us, suffered humiliation and crucifixion for our salvation and so we know how personally you came to us and how personally you care for us.

Our heart sometimes aches to be more like Jesus, more loving, more kind, more forgiving. Somehow, we miss the mark and turn away from being a

loving person, even demanding our own way and then your grace gently touches us and we are ashamed. Forgive us when we turn away from your pathway and try to go our own way. And then we hear the words echoing from your holy word:

'If we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. So, Lord we realize that your grace and mercy are still there and we must say: **THANKS BE TO GOD.**

READINGS

*** Isaiah 55: 1-9**

¹Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

²Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

³Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.

⁴See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples.

⁵Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor."

⁶Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

⁷Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

⁸"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.

⁹"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

*** Luke 13: 1-9**

¹Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ²Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

⁶Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. ⁷So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’

⁸“‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

HYMN – TIS 158 God has spoken by His Prophets

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoPiKqKTmbg>

SERMON

There is a song that comes from the Old Fashioned Revival Hour Song Book. It goes like this:

I once was lost in sin but Jesus took me in

And then a little light from heaven filled my soul

It bathed my heart in love and wrote my name above

And just a little talk with Jesus made me whole.

Simple words but very profound. And this leads me to the gospel passage that comes to us today from Luke’s gospel.

Here Jesus was told a sad story about some people from Galilee who had been brutally killed in the Temple by Pilate. What they were saying about this incident seemed to be asking Jesus to comment about the sadness of their temple being desecrated by this horrible act. How bad must have been these people from Galilee to have lost their lives that way especially in their Temple. I think Jesus reply must have startled them.

‘Do you think they were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you no but unless you too *repent*, you also will perish.

The idea in those day was that if you did the wrong thing then you would suffer a horrible death or would suffer in other ways. Job’s friends made this very clear to him at one stage.

Jesus was trying to tell his hearers that they need to love God and follow His commands and rules. It was more important than keeping up some tradition. The problem with the Israel nation in general was that because they were God’s chosen people, they seemed to think that they were privileged and could do almost anything they liked.

How many times had the prophets called the nation back to living God’s way. They had gone after foreign gods they had become arrogant they had felt that they did not need to abide by God’s law but so many time had to be pulled back to see their sin.

And then Jesus added to the story about another incident concerning a group of people who were killed by a fall of tower being built. He asked the same question about this. Again He told them unless you *repent* you too will suffer the same fate. You will perish.

Does this perishing this dying mean that they would suffer a physical death before their time. No! I think that what Jesus was referring to, was the fact that they would suffer a spiritual death and that the promise of eternal life with God would not happen. And for these chosen people that could be a disaster.

Jesus then went on to tell a parable.

A man had a fig tree growing in his orchard and he went there every year to look for fruit on it and he found none. So he said to the gardener, ‘For three years I have come here to look for fruit and found none. Chop it down, why should it use the soil?’

The gardener said: Leave it for one more year, I will dig around it and fertilize it and then if it does not bear fruit then I will cut it down.’

Jesus was sometimes very subtle when he told a parable and I really think that he was referring here to the Jewish nation who had so often showed no signs of living the way God desired or even expected them to live. It also reflected the attitude of so many individuals. Not even coming close to what God expected of His people.

This then leads me to ask the question of myself. Even though I am not a Jew but surely the same applies to me. Am I going to live a self - centred life pleasing only myself allowing the world and all the worldly attitudes of the world to infiltrate my life?

Is there a better way? Yes of course there is and it is Jesus' way. It is a way of repentance. That way of repentance is not only for the Jewish nation and the Jewish people it is universal, it is for all of us.

Early in my ministry, I was sent to Glen Innes as a Home Missionary. It was in the late 1960's. Alan Walker was a big name in the Methodist Church and he instigated a Mission called Newness N.S.W. Each Church was to look for an Evangelist from a list given us and we were asked to run a week long mission over the Easter of 1969 or some other time in that year. We had a fellow called Col Warren come to us from the Balmain Mission and Col did a good job in the Glen Innes Circuit. We had, at that time 7 churches to look after. Col attended three I think with the main effort at the Glen Innes Church. He and his wife stayed with us and our next door neighbours, an English couple and their young family would come in to our home for a meal.

I think that it was Easter Sunday and Alan and Linda, our neighbours were having an evening meal in our home. Colin, the Evangelist friend was telling about his relationship with some of the other clergy in Balmain in Sydney, how they would have a half night of prayer. Linda asked the question, 'Could we have a half night of prayer here now?' Why not! we both said. With that we started in our dining room around the table a time of prayer. We were not far advanced in that prayer meeting when Linda our English neighbour thanked God that that afternoon, He had come into her life. Naturally we were rejoicing and praising God. Alan, her husband said that after the service that day, Linda had been a bit funny. That afternoon they went for a drive and ended up at Martin's lookout, just above the town where Linda asked the Lord to come into her life and she just had to find a way to tell us. That prayer time was the ideal time.

This now becomes very personal. Later that night, I went in to say goodnight to our twin daughters, aged 8. As I kissed them goodnight one said to me Daddy, I have never asked Jesus to come into my life, neither have I said the other. So there on that day two 8 year olds and one mother of 30 plus gave their life to Jesus. Hallelujah!!!

Val and I have been blessed time and time again to see people's lives changed by the Lord.

The lesson I have learned from over 50 years of ministry that God, through the Lord Jesus Christ can change people from the guttermost to the uttermost. From the ordinary to the extraordinary. From the mild to the strong. And it is all glory to Him. Does it require repentance? Yes! Does it require honesty with yourself and God? Yes! Do you have to follow a set pattern? No! Just be sincere with God, repent and He will make the difference in our lives. That's what Jesus wanted of the Jewish people, that is what He wants of us. Amen.

HYMN – TIS 53 Come Sing Praises to the Lord our God

Sorry no You Tube link available

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

Let us respond to our loving God with the gift of our offerings:

Gracious God, receive this offering, and the offering of our lives, that we might worthily serve you, and completely love you. In the name of Christ. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

As Christians we are taking a 40 day journey during lent to commemorate Jesus '40 days of fasting in the wilderness before the commencement of his ministry.

Jeff and I decided to spend Lent in studying "Pilgrim's Progress" "a Christian allegory about a Christian's dangerous journey from this world to the next.

"Pilgrim's progress" was written by John Bunyan in 1678 during part of his 12 years spent in an English prison for being a Puritan preacher.

Christian lived in the city of destruction and he read a book (the Bible) which caused him to worry —"what must I do to be saved ?"— the need to be saved became his burden on his back

Christian began his journey and met Evangelist who told Christian to follow the shining light to the wicket gate. So he commenced to run in the right direction but he was pursued by Obstinate and Pliable pleading with him to turn back & return home

Pliable and Christian ended up wallowing in the slough of despond — Pliable climbed out and rushed back home —Christian was rescued by Helpful who helped him back on track

As Christian continued towards the wicket gate he met Mr worldly Wiseman who advised Christian to find Mr Legality and his son Civility who would show him an easier road to get rid of his burden. However it was a horrifying journey and Mr Evangelist met him again and told him that he had rejected the word of the Lord for the advice of Mr Worldly Wiseman.

Christian was ashamed & returned to the right path. Along the path he met some sleepy travellers who refused to wake up & walk with him.

Finally he reached the wicket gate and as he knocked at the door arrows from Beelzebub (the Prince of devils) narrowly missed him. The keeper of the wicket gate (called Goodwill) quickly opened the gate and directed Christian to the straight and narrow path again.

Christian reached the place of deliverance —the house of the interpreter The interpreter showed Christian that man's soul is clogged with the dust of sin and only God's grace is able to cleanse it.

Here Christian saw a sad professor who was in an iron cage because he had failed to keep watch and had followed the delights of the world thus unable to continue his journey

Christian approached another gateway guarded by fierce men in armour — he saw a valiant man approach who cut his way with a sword to safety and Christian learnt his safety depended not on cleverness but on simple courage

Christian continued his journey by running along the road now fenced by a wall named Salvation.

Christian passed an open tomb and then ran up a little hill to a wayside cross As the shadow of the cross fell across him —Christians' burden fell from his back and it tumbled down the hill into the open tomb⁵ The simple act of gazing at the Cross had set him free from his burden of guilt. At that time Christian met three shining ones (angels) who assured him of his salvation—dressed him in white robes & gave him a parchment which he was to keep with him at all times Christian felt as light as air and was filled with joy

But —that is not the end of the dangerous journey – it's only the beginning —there is much more to come.

Let us pray together

Our Lord God, we thank you that we live in this era of human history. We thank you for the Bible and the many different translations we have .

We thank you for the book ,Pilgrim's progress and for the wonderful word pictures it gives to describe the dangerous journey of the Christian believer —also about the world in which we find ourselves today We thank you for this season of Lent leading up to Easter when we can reflect on our own spiritual journey from the beginning at our conversion – our time at the cross where our burden of sins was rolled away-- to the ups and downs and arounds of our lives as we move along towards the celestial city Give us the strength ,wisdom and courage to keep to the straight and narrow road which leads to true life Help us to be alert to the dangers and pitfalls along our spiritual journey

We pray for our elderly – those who are unable to meet with us any more due to illness or because of the difficulty in moving about We bring before you all those who are sick and frail and —those who are lonely or sad – we pray for peace and love and comfort for them

We pray for our world – we know, despite you creating a perfect world in the beginning of time, our world is in a real mess! There are wars, riots, earthquakes, landslides, famines and sicknesses. There are fires, floods and droughts as a result of changes in our climate often caused by our own selfishness, thoughtlessness and greed All of these things are producing despair, fear and unrest around the world

Lord, we do not know how to respond to these events but to pray for your peace and love and for faith in your son Jesus Christ – the one who taught his disciples 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 forever. Amen.

HYMN – TIS 233 I will Sing the Wonderous Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAcpYr9l6Tk&t=14s>

COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION

May Grace and Mercy from God our Father, the love and companionship of Jesus his own dear Son and the power and presence of the Holy Spirit bless preserve and keep us in his love forever Amen

FINAL SONG - TIS 778 Shalom to You

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH_HdkWs74