

Sunday, 8 August 2021

Welcome

Good morning church! Another week in lockdown.

As you would have seen, Rachel has been putting VLOGs together, she works very hard to put these together for the benefit of us, so please remember to send her your recipes or even photos and videos of your cooking by Tuesday. We've extended it for two days.

And maybe you've already seen, "How well do you know your pastor?" I would encourage you to try that out. I know I share quite a bit in my sermons so I'm really curious how much you know about me. Maybe we could try use that for some of you! Please let me know if you're willing to be interviewed in the future.

A Challenge

So I was reflecting on the importance of the children in our church this week. I don't know about you, but I was really encouraged when Lucas prayed the church family prayer. I know that many of you made the comment to me that you too found it encouraging.

Then this week, I can across Psalm 78, and I wanted to read to you the first 4 verses. Because it reflects on the importance of the next generation.

Psa. 78:1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;

incline your ears to the words of my mouth!

2 I will open my mouth in a parable;

I will utter dark sayings from of old,

3 things that we have heard and known,

that our fathers have told us.

4 We will not hide them from their children,

but tell to the coming generation

the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,

and the wonders that he has done.

Many of us have lived a long life. We have children, nieces, nephews, grandchildren. I wonder whether we think about the importance of sharing the gospel, the love of God with the next generation. I heard this saying that the gospel is only one generation from being forgotten. That's true, but we have a mighty God whose plans will not be thwarted. But we have a part to play. Each week, I'm going to try lay down a challenge to us. And this week, the first challenge I want to lay down to you is to pray for the next generation. You know the children who are in our church, I want you to pick one of the children and pray for them each day this week. It doesn't have to be very complicated. It could be "Dear Lord, I pray that Lucas will continue to grow in maturity." Now, I don't want you all choosing Lucas, you know there are other children. One of them you might have noticed in our services. If you don't know their names, ask someone, so you can pray for them. Pray about something small you notice about them. Maybe you notice that they have lots of energy, you could pray that they would use that energy to serve their parents. Maybe you notice that they are sensitive, you could pray that they would be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

So, will you accept this challenge?

Prayer

With that in mind, I'm going to read from Matthew

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been

handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Matthew 11:25-27 (ESV)

Let's pray.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you have entrusted to us the care of children. As we teach and train them, give us a calm strength and patient wisdom, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father, grant rest to your children as we come into your presence. Take the helmet from our brow. Take from us the weight of our heavy armour for a while, may we know your peace, and be at rest in you. Come to our aid and help us we plead. As you have already washed your people in that fountain filled with blood so that we are cleansed from every guilty stain, so now this day wash us with water through the Word to make us holy. Come to us as you came to the disciples and wash our feet again. Refresh our hearts in your presence; prepare us for sweet fellowship with yourself. As the high priests washed before entering the Holy of Holies, so wash us as we now approach your throne, that nothing may hinder our prayers, and we may be free to worship you acceptably, with reverence and awe, in spirit and in truth.

Amen

Apostle's Creed

Let's say the Apostle's Creed together.

I believe in God the Father Almighty

Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord;

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,

Born of the Virgin Mary,

Suffered under Pontius Pilate,

*Was crucified, dead, and buried;
The third day he rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
From there he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit;
the holy universal Church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Scripture Reading

I'm going to ask Rachel to read to us from Mark 12:13-27 (ESV).

Mark 12:13 And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. 14 And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" 15 But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." 16 And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." 17 Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him.

Mark 12:18 And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, 19 "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. 20 There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. 21 And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. 22 And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. 23 In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife."

Mark 12:24 Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong."

Devotional

Before we look at this passage, let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word. We ask that you would help us to be encouraged from this passage this morning. Help us to live for Jesus. In his name, Amen.

Recently, we celebrated my nephew's birthday. Except because of the lockdown, Rachel and I couldn't see him face to face so we decided that it would be a good idea if we sent him a present. Rachel spent a morning going to the online Target website to find things. One of the things that you have to know about my nephew is that he loves Cars. You know, the Disney movie, Cars. Maybe the families know what I'm talking about. Lightning McQueen! And then there's Mater. I love spending time with my nephew as he puts together Cars puzzles and drawing McQueen and watching him pretend driving. So for his birthday year, we decided that we would buy him all these Cars toys and get it delivered to my brother's house. He absolutely loved it (my nephew, not my brother).

But seeing him over video enjoying those toys. It got me thinking, what would happen if he were to break those toys? I mean, he were to stamp on the toys and de-

stroy them? I mean, it would upset me because I got the present. Or imagine if you gave a present to someone and they were to regift it. Did you ever watch that Seinfeld episode where there's this labelmaker. Jerry works out that he receives a present from a friend, a labelmazer. But he works out that the labelmaker was initially given to his friend by Elaine. Rachel, recently, we think received a gift that was a regift. We're not quite sure, but we have our suspicions.

Today, as we look at this passage together, one of themes that comes to mind is the theme of regifting. The idea that we aren't thankful for a gift that we receive and then we pass it on. Specifically, gifts from God. I have to admit that I can be a regifter with God. I have regifted things. You know from the last vlog that one of my best subjects at high school was, maths! It was a gift from God, being able to think through maths problems with such focus and logic. But you know I wanted to regift that, I didn't want to be known as someone who was good at mathematics. I mean, how is doing maths an impressive party trick? It's not!

So today as we look at this passage, I want to encourage with three things. All we have is from God. Be generous. And we'll talk about our generous God.

Everything we Have is From God

So let's talk about the first point, everything we have is from God. As we've been going through the gospel of Mark, one of the things that I wish to shine a light on is what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus. I've tried to point out different things, like being a follower of Jesus means that we take up our cross daily and die to ourselves. We seek to show love to others around us. We witness to others about the love of Jesus. Today, I wanted to shine a light on the fact that being a Christian means we acknowledge that everything we have is from God.

If you have your bible open, please have a look at the first section. We're told that Pharisees and Herodians seek to trap Jesus, and they ask him a question, have a look with me,

"Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" Mark 12:14 (ESV)

And here's the thing, Israel is under Roman control. So the Pharisees and the Herodians want to trap Jesus. If Jesus answers they are to pay taxes to Caesar, then he

doesn't please the Israelites who want to be independent from Rome. In fact, taxes would have been paid by money. Coins in those days would have the portrait of the emperor together with a title as a way to tell the population who was in charge. There wasn't social media, no Facebook, no Instagram, no newspapers. You'd know who was in charge of the empire by looking at the coin. And often it might say, 'Son of the Divine Augustus.' So if Jesus says they are to pay taxes, it would have offended the Israelites. But if he says no, then he'd be considered a rebel. He's a zealot, someone who opposes the Roman Empire. They want to stick him in between a rock and a hard place.

But I love what Jesus says, have a look,

But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him. Mark 12:15-17 (ESV)

Jesus answers that you can honour both Caesar, the ruler of Rome and you can honour God. You give to the ruler of Rome the things that are his, and you give to God the things that are his. As long as earthly rulers don't directly contradict God, then we are to honour those who rule over us.

But here's Jesus' point that we need to learn, we are to give to God what is God's. The ruler of Rome deserved his taxes, because he is the ruler. But the Israelites listening would have realised that what was more important and this is why Jesus wants us to give to God what is God's because he is the ruler.

Here's the thing, what is it that you have that has been given to God? When I think about what has been given to me by God, I realise that everything I have is from God. My money, my time, my intellect, the opportunity for me to meet Rachel, my skills. I cannot say that anything hasn't been from God.

And if you were to think about your own life, you'd have to say that everything that you've gone through, everything that you have, everything that you are has been given to you from God. Everything is on loan from God. In fact, do you notice that Jesus asks in whose image is the denarius made in? It's made in the emperor's image. But who are we made in the image of? We're made in the image of God!

Everything that we have is from God.

Be Generous

But the second thing we need to do is be generous. We are to be generous with what we've been given to us.

It's what it means when Jesus says, "give to God what is God's!" The truth is that God owns everything, and because he owns everything, it makes us his managers. Jesus tells a parable, of a master who gives his servants talents, and he calls them to account (Luke 19). There's one servant who buries the talent. And the master calls him out.

We are to be generous with everything. To be generous with your time. To be generous with your gifts. To be generous with your money. To be generous with who you are. To love God with all your resources. To love others with every single resource.

As you know, I love my cats. I own them. Rachel and I feed them. We house them. We take them to the vets. Can you imagine if my cats decided to run away from me? Imagine I could talk to them and they said to me, "you don't own me!" I'd be like, Yes I do! You give me to me what is mine. You are mine. It's the same with God with us. Everything we have is his.

Let me lay down a challenge. What is one thing that God has given you that you can give to God, to bless someone?

Maybe it's your money. Giving your money to someone who needs here. Let me clear, I'm not asking you to give money to the church. But I am asking you to be generous with your money as God asks you to. Randy Alcorn says, "God comes right out and tells us why he gives us more money than we need. It's not so we can find more ways to spend it. It's not so we can indulge ourselves and spoil our children. It's not so we can insulate ourselves from needing God's provision. It's so we can give and give generously (2 Corinthians 8:14; 9:11)."

Maybe it's a skill, maybe God is asking you to use your skill to bless someone. I'm not very good as a handyman, so I have to thank Mike and John, for their practical skills in helping install the floorboards at church. "Justin, I have no skills!" Yes you do. God has made you, you are unique. You have something to contribute. You have something you can be generous with. Maybe you have big ears, I mean you listen, you love listening to other people. You love asking questions, you need to be generous with what you have!

Have you considered, your children are a gift from God? And maybe God is asking you to look after them, to be a good manager of them until they become an adult. Let me ask, do you pray for them? I tell you, you can only parent them if you pray for them.

What is one thing that God has given you that you can give to God, to bless someone?

That's our second point. Be generous.

Our Generous God

But why can we be generous? Apart from the fact that God has given us everything we have, why can we be generous? When we look at the Scriptures, we see Christians in the New Testament who are radically generous.

Let's talk about about our generous God. Apart from the fact that God has given us everything that we have right now, I want to point out another reason why we can be generous. And that's because we have a generous God.

Let's look at the second half of the passage, at a group of Jews, called Sadducees. They're priests, but they don't believe in the resurrection, but in the written scriptures. And they ask a question about family. It's a highly technical question, about a woman whose husband dies. And then the brother in law marries her. And then he dies. Up to seven brothers. I bet you've never heard this, but in the Old Testament, there was an obligation to carry on the name of a family if a man died. The name and family would only carry on if there are children and it would be the obligation the dead man's brother to have children with the widow.

But the Sadducees miss the point. Jesus points it out to them that they don't understand that marriage is for earth, but there will not be marriage in heaven. Marriage is a gift that God has given for today. But when eternity comes, there won't be marriage. And I want to point out something even more important, because what does Jesus say? Please have a look with me.

And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong." Mark 12:26-27 (ESV)

Here's a reason why we can be generous. We can be generous because we have a God who is generous. We have a God who is God not of the dead, but of the living. We have a God who was willing to send his son into this world that people who trust may be raised from the dead. We have a God who is generous with us, who is willing to give us the kingdom. The entire kingdom. And eternal life. That's the god we have, that's the god who we trust in. How good is that?

In its early days, a US Christian theological seminary was in critical need of \$10,000 to keep the work going. During a prayer meeting, a renowned Bible teacher, who was also a lecturer at the school, prayed, "Lord, you own the cattle on a thousand hills. Please sell some of those cattle to help us meet this need." A prayer based on Psalm 50. Shortly after the prayer meeting, a check for \$10,000 arrived at the school, sent days earlier by a friend who had no idea of the urgent need or that prayer. The man simply said the money came from the sale of some of his cattle! But it was an answer by God to prayer. That's the God whom we worship. A generous God. And if we understand how generous he is with us then we will want to be generous with everything he has given us.

Let's remember that everything we have is from him. Let's be generous. Because our living God has been generous with us. Let's pray.

Church Family Prayer

For today's church family prayer, I thought I would share a prayer from this book called the Valley of Vision. It's a collection of prayers from Puritans, and it's something I highly recommend. Some of my other minister friends use this to shape the way that they pray. Today, I'm going to lead us in a prayer called, "Need of Jesus." (p.102) It's got old English like Thee, and Thou, so I thought I would change them to help us pray. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus,

We are blind, but be our light.

We are ignorant, but be our wisdom.

We are self-willed, but be our mind.

*Open our ear to grasp quickly your Spirit's voice,
and delightfully run after his beckoning hand;
Melt our conscience that no hardness remain,
make it alive to evil's slightest touch;
When Satan approaches may we flee to your wounds,
and there cease to tremble at all troubles.
Be our good shepherd to lead me into the green pastures of your Word,
And cause us to lie down beside the rivers of its comforts.
Fill us with peace, that no disquieting worldly gales
May ruffle the calm surface of our soul.
Your cross was upraised to be our refuge,
Your blood streamed forth to wash us clean,
Your death occurred to give us a surety,
Your name is our property to save us,
By you, all heaven is poured into our hearts,
But our hearts are too narrow to comprehend your love.
We were strangers, outcasts, slaves, rebels,
But your cross has brought us near,
Your cross has softened our hearts,
Your cross has made us your Father's children,
Your cross has admitted us to your family.
Your cross has made us joint heirs with you Jesus.
O that we may love thee as you love us,*

*That we may walk worthy of you, our Lord,
That we may reflect the image of heaven's first born.
May we always see your beauty with the clear eye of faith,
And feel the power of your Spirit in our hearts,
For unless he moves mightily in us,
No inward fire will be kindled. Amen.*

Closing

That's the end of our service. I'm going to read a blessing from Romans 15.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13 (ESV)

Here's some hymns for today. Lynette actually recommended the first one. In fact, a couple of years ago when Rachel and I were in Canberra, Rob Smith came to preach at Caringbah which I thought was really cool. He actually wrote I Will Trust You in the Darkness. So Give that a go. And if you have a hymn or song that you want to recommend, send it through and I'll include it in a future service!

And just a reminder, I laid down a challenge this morning, that we pray for the future generation. Think of a kid that comes to our church and pray for them each day this week. Be bold, be specific, and watch for God.

Okay, that's the end, bye for now!

I Will Trust You In The Darkness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5FxET7XBEo>

Jesus, Strong and Kind: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5Y8s-Sz_ac

How Great Thou Art: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLRrd30cxf4>

What a Friend: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKdXDSuZg-E>