

Sunday, 10 October 2021

Announcements

Hi everyone!

So I have an update from the elders, we talked a little about reopening and we're looking to reopen when we reach 80% vaccinations. At the moment, the state's on track for reopening on 25 October, so we'd reopen church on 31 October. We'd need to abide by the 4 square meter rule and no singing and masks must be worn. But then the rules would change in December. If you have any questions, please just ask me or one of the elders.

For the time being, if you want, Rachel and I want to catch up in person over picnic. But according to regulation you need to be double vaccinated, and it can only be 5 fully vaccinated people at a time (note that the limit does not include children aged 12 or under). We have enjoyed the catch ups so far!

Finally, Rachel and I are going to take this week off. Bible study on Wednesday night will still continue. Next Sunday, I'll be preaching on Psalm 11, please read that this week and I'll send you the sermon on Sunday. Rachel apologises for not releasing a vlog this week. She's had a problem with her throat. I have also asked that she doesn't do vlogs on our week off so vlogs will start after our week off.

Prayer

Let me read,

Rom. 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written,

*“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

Rom. 8:37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:1, 31-39 (ESV)

At the end of last week's devotion, I reflected on the need to remind ourselves of who we are. And I wanted to encourage us that if you are in Christ, there is no guilt, no shame and no condemnation. I wanted to encourage us all with these truths. If you are in Christ, then you are loved with a perfect love.

Let's pray,

Heavenly Father, thank you for your perfect love for us through Christ Jesus. Thank you that through his life, death and resurrection, we have been set free from sin. That there is no condemnation. You are for us, not against us. Thank you LORD that nothing will separate us from your love. In Jesus name, 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

We're going to read Psalm 52,

Psa. 52:0 To the choirmaster. A Maskil of David, when Doeg, the Edomite, came and told Saul, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech."

Psa. 52:1 Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man?

The steadfast love of God endures all the day.

2 Your tongue plots destruction,
like a sharp razor, you worker of deceit.

3 You love evil more than good,
and lying more than speaking what is right. *Selah*

4 You love all words that devour,
O deceitful tongue.

Psa. 52:5 But God will break you down forever;
he will snatch and tear you from your tent;
he will uproot you from the land of the living. *Selah*

6 The righteous shall see and fear,
and shall laugh at him, saying,

7 "See the man who would not make
God his refuge,
but trusted in the abundance of his riches
and sought refuge in his own destruction!"

Psa. 52:8 But I am like a green olive tree
in the house of God.

I trust in the steadfast love of God
forever and ever.

9 I will thank you forever,
because you have done it.

I will wait for your name, for it is good,
in the presence of the godly.

Devotional

Did you ever play sport when in primary school? You know what the worst thing for me was? It was when you had to be picked for sport. I have a confession. I was always picked last. It was terrible. Even when I had good friends, they would pick me last. To be fair, I wasn't the sporty type. I was the yay, it's raining, so I don't need to play Saturday sports type. But that meant that when my friends were picking teams, I could see their allegiance. And it wasn't to me. And that hurt.

Today, I wanted to ask the question, where does your allegiance lie? Where is your allegiance, to the Team world or to Team God? Are you a friend to Satan or are you a friend of Jesus? It's a question that's posed by this Psalm, Psalm 52. And where we turn to reveals our hearts. As you see in the superscript, the editor of the Psalms has written the following,

Psa. 52:0 To the choirmaster. A Maskil of David, when Doeg, the Edomite, came and told Saul, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech."

Psalm 52:0 (ESV)

The editor attributes this Psalm as a Psalm of David, but links it with the events that are found in 1 Samuel 21 and 22. Maybe you know the story that's found in these chapters. King Saul was jealous of David throughout his kingship, and Saul attempted to kill David multiple times. David is on the run with his company of men. They come to a priest, named Ahimelech and ask to eat the bread of the presence. Ahimelech allows them to eat the bread, but watching is a chief shepherd named Doeg, who tells Saul what he has seen. Saul in a fit of sinful rage and anger kills all the priests, including Ahimelech. Not only does he kill the priests but he slaughters everyone, their families, children and infants and the animals as well.

David has not done anything wrong, and yet he's being chased by the king. His life is in serious danger, and I want to be clear that what Saul has done is absolutely horrendous. It's pure evil. We're told that when he hears news of David being in Ahimelech's house that he's at Gibeah, which was known as a place of illicit worship. So it should confront us that Saul's allegiance to the LORD is questionable. What he does is not acceptable, he kills innocent people in a fit of rage. And Doeg, he has used his tongue for evil, and he gets involved with the killing of innocent people.

At the heart of this Psalm, is a question about allegiances. This Psalm really asks us where does our allegiances lie? Like Saul, and Doeg on the one hand, whose allegiances are to the world. And on the other hand, we have David whose allegiance is to the LORD. You can either have an allegiance to the world, or your have an allegiance to God.

I once heard a story, of how there was two patches of grass, that was divided by a fence. On one patch of grass, there was Jesus. And the other was Satan. And as people were walking by, Jesus and Satan were calling to each person. Some people decided to follow Jesus, and others decided to follow Satan. One man thought he'd be smart, and he thought he would sit on the fence. At the end of the day, Satan said to the man, come along. The man said, Why? I'm on the fence. Satan replies, I own the fence. Obviously, that's not in the bible, but it's a great illustration that you can't sit on the fence. You are either a friend of the world, or a friend of Jesus.

But the first half of this Psalm looks at those who have their allegiance to the world. Just like Doeg who spoke evil of David to Saul. Have a look at the passage,

Psa. 52:1 Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man?

The steadfast love of God endures all the day.

2 Your tongue plots destruction,

like a sharp razor, you worker of deceit.

3 You love evil more than good,

and lying more than speaking what is right. Selah

4 You love all words that devour,

O deceitful tongue.

Psalm 52:1-4 (ESV)

Here is a description of those who choose to have their allegiance to the world, just like Doeg and Saul. They speak evil. Their words plot destruction, they love evil, their words devour. And it's a test for us, isn't it? We can tell our allegiance by

our tongues, by what we say. I can tell your allegiance by what you say. Do you speak evil? Do you gossip? Do you bring people down behind their backs?

It's not just this Psalm that talks about the importance of our tongues, it's the New Testament as well! I'm reminded of the letter of James, where he warns us that our tongues are such a dangerous tools. We use it to bless our Lord and Father, and at the same time we curse people who are made in the image of God. And James tells us that should not be so, a spring can't pour out fresh and salt water. A fig tree can't bear olives (James 3:5-12).

Before I came to Caringbah, I had to sit my trials for licence. Licence to preach. And so the Students committee came to watch me preach at church. I was pretty nervous, and one of the markers noticed it so he told me this story. A story of a famous preacher who was going to preach in front of thousands of people. It was just before the service so he was in the bathroom just settling himself. Just a bit of self talk, you know? Except that he forgot that his microphone was on. So he's in the bathroom, looking at the mirror and he starts saying, "You got this." Everyone in the church can hear it. Then he says, "Go get em tiger." The reception he got when he came out of the bathrooms. I'm glad he didn't say anything too controversial.

But our tongues reveal where our hearts really are and where we place our trust and our allegiance. Do we use our tongue to bring people down, to gossip, to sin against other people, to curse other people? Or do we use our tongues to bless other people? Do we speak well of others, do we give thanks to God? Do we give thanks to God for our rulers (1 Timothy 2) because God has placed them there (Romans 13)?

This Psalm tells us that if our allegiance is to the world, then we need to heed a warning. This Psalm gives you a warning, have a look,

Psa. 52:5 But God will break you down forever;

he will snatch and tear you from your tent;

he will uproot you from the land of the living. Selah

6 The righteous shall see and fear,

and shall laugh at him, saying,

7 "See the man who would not make

*God his refuge,
but trusted in the abundance of his riches
and sought refuge in his own destruction!"*

Psalm 52:5-7 (ESV)

I want to ask, where is your allegiance, are you a friend of the world or are you a friend of Jesus? What do you say privately to those who know you well? We often hold our tongue with those who don't know us, but what about those who know us well. Are you full of gossip, do you speak evil, do you commit evil when no one is watching?

If your allegiance is to the world, if you're a friend of the world, if you know that you are causing suffering to innocent people, if you've trusted in the abundance of your riches just as the man in verse 7, if you've become a friend of the world, just like Saul and Doeg, here's a warning. There is a day when the LORD will judge you. There will be a day when the LORD will break you down. You will uproot you from the land of the living, and you need to seriously consider where you life is headed. Because you are headed for destruction.

This warning isn't just for those who don't trust in Jesus, but it's a question all of us need to answer. Maybe you say you're a Christian, but your actions speak otherwise. The message is clear, you need to repent. You need to turn from your evil ways, you need to watch your tongue, you need to stop doing evil and turn to Jesus Christ who gave up his life for you that you might escape the wrath of God. Your friendship with the world is making you an enemy of God and leading you down the path of destruction. Your allegiance needs to change from the world, and you need to place your allegiance to Jesus. It's quite possible that you've trusted in Jesus, but you are slowly but surely making yourself a friend of the world, you are giving into your selfish passions, and I have to ask, are you making yourself an enemy of God?

But maybe, you're like David, and you're suffering at the hands of evil people. You've done nothing wrong, you are innocent but you are being treated terribly because you are a friend of Jesus. What are you to do? Do you start grumbling? Do you start complaining to others about how you're being treated unfairly? Are you supposed to stand up, and fight back?

This Psalm tells us what we are to do. Have a look, because the second half of this Psalm is a word of encouragement to us.

Psa. 52:8 But I am like a green olive tree

in the house of God.

I trust in the steadfast love of God

forever and ever.

9 I will thank you forever,

because you have done it.

I will wait for your name, for it is good,

in the presence of the godly.

Psalm 52:8-9 (ESV)

This is a lesson for us. For those of us who are friends, who declare their allegiance to the LORD. We can place our trust in the LORD just as David himself places his trust in the LORD. It's something that we see in verse 8 and verse 1, we can place our trust in the steadfast love of the LORD. David never sought revenge against Saul. He never fought back against Saul. He never spoke out against the LORD's anointed. But he trusted that the LORD would act on his behalf. He waited on the LORD. Because David trusts the LORD to act, David declares himself to be a green olive tree in the house of God. The green olive tree is often used in temple language and it's actually an image of peace and prosperity.

And it's the same for us, isn't it? We can put our trust in the LORD to do us good even when we go through suffering at the hands of evil people. We don't need to seek revenge, we don't need to speak out against those who wrong us. But we can be like Jesus, entrusting himself to his Father in Heaven.

Just as Peter says,

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 1 Peter 2:22-23 (ESV)

And Paul says,

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:19-21 (ESV)

And Jesus himself says,

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:11-12 (ESV)

Prayer

Let's pray

Heavenly Father, thank you for your word. We ask that you would give us the strength to love you with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love others as yourself. Clear away any distractions in our lives that may prevent us from loving you and loving others. Open our spiritual eyes to the truth that you have given us all that we have and help us to be generous with it. Open our eyes that we may remember and see that you have given to us as an inheritance the kingdom of God and so help us to be content with what we have right now.

We pray for our church, help us to live according to your will. We acknowledge that Jesus is the head of our church. He is the chief shepherd. Please give the elders wisdom and humility to follow King Jesus. Help us all to follow the head of the church, Jesus Christ. Help us as a church to be light and salt to the world. Help us to evangelise, to speak the good news of Jesus Christ to those around us.

We also pray for missionaries around the world. Even as they serve with COVID, please keep them safe. Help the missionaries to serve faithfully, remind them that whilst they may sow, another waters, it is you that grows. Help them to be faithful, and to look out for the harvest. Lord, thank you for hearing our prayers. We can be

confident that you will hear our prayers because Jesus is at your right hand interceding for us. Thank you for Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen.

Closing

Well that's the end of our service. Just a reminder that Rachel and I are away this week. Bible study on Wednesday night will still continue. Psalm 11 next week! And also, we are looking to reopen as soon as NSW hits 80% double vaccination and that's looking to be the week of 25 October. So we're looking to see each other face to face Sunday, 31 October.

Let me give the blessing,

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)

Amen.

Hymns

Come Thou Fount: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFT9KwrfZVY>

The Wise Man Built: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eu5bBDRpzPM>

Blessed Assurance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDeiy9-t2GE>

There is a Redeemer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYMhYzcPo>