

Sunday, 15 August 2021

Welcome

Good morning church! Another week in lockdown.

So Rachel has officially sent out the Caringbah Quarantine Recipe book! And I have to say the recipes are looking really good. I'm also loving the videos, it feels like I'm watching television chefs, it's just that good. It's been really good to hear from you all about recipes.

A Challenge

Each challenge, I want to either help you to grow in your love for God, or grow in your love for your neighbour.

So last week, I laid down the challenge about praying for the next generation. Growing in our love for our neighbour. To pick a kid that attends our church and to pray for them. I've heard that you've been praying for them, and I'm really proud of you all for doing that. This week, we're going to do another challenge, which is related to our love for our neighbour and that's to bless their parents.

For example, in Ephesians 6, Paul says

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

Now I'm a father, to my pets, and that's totally easy. I'm sure it's much harder with kids, but I'm sure it's infinitely more joyful with children. For those of you who are parents, maybe you remember what it was like raising your children all those years

ago. But I reflect on today's society, it's no longer "Christian", there's way more distractions in the world. Television, tablets, smartphones.

This week's challenge, pick a parent you know in our church, pray for them. What can you pray for? Maybe pray that they would have patience or energy, or time to spend with their children. Pray for the men, that they would learn to lead their wives. If you have an opportunity, maybe you can show them that you care, and they matter. Be creative with this. Be you too! I mean, if you're not a handy man, don't be a handy man. That's not loving.

So, will you accept this challenge?

Prayer

With that in mind, I'm going to read from Philippians 2.

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Philippians 2:1-4 (ESV)

Let's pray.

Gracious God, we worship you for your steadfast love and faithfulness to us your redeemed people. We are so thankful that you have loved us from eternity past, before time began. Yours is a love without beginning, without limit, without measure, without failure, without change, and without end. We cannot begin to comprehend the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love you have for us that has been so wonderfully expressed in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet we have believed in and have come to know something of the love you have for us. Help us to remain in your love so that we may live in you and you in us. Help us to love you whom we have not seen by loving our brother or sister whom we have seen. Teach us to love as you first loved us. Assure us that now nothing can separate us from your love or snatch us out of your hand.

Shed abroad your love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. May we never be reduced to the level of a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal, and become as nothing, for lack of love. Grant to us the patience and kindness of love in all our dealings with others. Help us increasingly to reflect the likeness of him who gave his life in selfless love. Grant that we may faithfully bear the image of our Creator, who is the very essence of love, so to love you with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbour as our self. Teach us today something more of your amazing love for us and increase our love for you through time and eternity, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Psalm 100

I thought today, that we could say Psalm 100 together.

Psa. 100:0 A Psalm for giving thanks.

Psa. 100:1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

2 Serve the LORD with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

Psa. 100:3 Know that the LORD, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Psa. 100:4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving,

and his courts with praise!

Give thanks to him; bless his name!

Psa. 100:5 For the LORD is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,

and his faithfulness to all generations.

Scripture Reading

I'm going to ask Rachel to read to us from Mark 12:28-44 (ESV).

Mark 12:28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And 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.' 31 The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. 33 And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Mark 12:35 And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? 36 David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared,

"The Lord said to my Lord,

"Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet."

Mark 12:37 David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly.

Mark 12:38 And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces 39 and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, 40 who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

Mark 12:41 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. 43 And

he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

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.

Introduction

Well, as you know, Rachel and I are vegan for health reasons. We actually started last year on the advice of Rachel's nutritionist as a way to manage her lupus. But that doesn't stop us from enjoying food. I sometimes catch Rachel watching YouTube videos where people go visit cafes in other countries. Do you know people like that? But I'm thankful for Rachel because she's the one that mainly cooks at home. You know the saying, that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Well, I can definitely say that's true with Rachel and me. The way to my heart is through my stomach.

And that's gotten me thinking about the heart. I wanted to ask a question, is your heart is the right place? As we've made our way through the gospel of Mark, I've been trying to paint a picture of what it means to follow Jesus. But if you had to summarise what it means, if you had to get to the heart of the matter, what does it mean to follow Jesus? Well, today's passage really answers that. Jesus gets to the heart of what it means to be a Christian. And what we'll see is that being Christian involves our hearts. So I want to unpack that this morning. I have three things. Firstly, love Jesus. Secondly, bless others. Thirdly, Jesus' love.

Love Jesus

So let's have a look at the first point, to love Jesus. Let's have a look at the passage together,

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And 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.' Mark 12:28-30 (ESV)

I love that Jesus is clear. If you had to boil down what it means to follow Jesus, then it is to love God with everything you have. When you look in the Old Testament, there were many commands. The first four of the Ten Commandments specifically addressed your relationship with God. And then there was things you had to do like making sacrifices in the temple, there were certain foods that Jews were not allowed to eat including pork. But Jesus says, it all boils down to loving God!

But I want to put it another way, we are to love Jesus with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Do you notice that later in the passage Jesus gives the scribes a quiz? He asks them to interpret a Psalm, Psalm 110, a Psalm of David.

And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, "'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.'" David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly. Mark 12:35-37 (ESV)

Maybe you're wondering, why is this here? Part of the reason is to show that Jesus is greater, and smarter than the Pharisees, the Herodians and the Scribes. We've seen how they try to entrap Jesus but he doesn't fall for it. And here Jesus shows that he's wiser than all of them. But another reason this passage is here is to show us that Jesus is Lord. A prophecy a thousand years prior, fulfilled by Jesus. Jesus is showing them that he is the messiah, the Christ, the anointed one sent by God. Jesus is Lord and we are to love him with everything we have. We don't love some force out there. We don't love "Mother Earth." We love a person, we love Jesus.

Jesus is to be number one priority in our lives. Far above everything else. Just like the poor widow in verse 42 who gives the two copper coins, giving everything to God. What does it mean to love Jesus?

So, as you all know, I'm a crazy cat man. And when Rachel and I got married, she wanted to get a pet and so I suggested we get cats. But I remember when we went

to Malabar to the cat breeder, to meet Kristoff for the first time. He was only a kitten. We said we would take him. The breeder told us it would be another 6 weeks for us before we could take him because he had to spend more time with his mother. It was the longest 6 weeks that Rachel and I had to wait. And when we got him, we loved having him around. We spent all this time playing with him, all this effort to make sure that he was comfortable, we spent all this money buying food, treats and toys for him. We loved Kristoff. We love Kristoff. But you know, at the heart of it, the reason why we spent money, the time and energy on Kristoff was because we enjoyed him. We enjoyed his company.

In the same way, in a greater way, I think that loving Jesus is enjoying him. And it means enjoying him. We know we enjoy Jesus when we spend our money the way he would want us to spend our money, we spend our time and our energy enjoying him. We think about Jesus because we enjoy him. Yes, it might mean enjoying the good gifts that he has given us, like our families, our money, our friends, our travelling. They're all good gifts, but nothing should compare to our enjoyment of Jesus because there is no-one besides him.

So let me ask, do you enjoy Him?

Bless Others

Let's talk about the second point, that's blessing others. Let's have a look at the passage, and continue the story,

The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Mark 12:31-33 (ESV)

Jesus is asked what is the greatest commandment and he speaks about two. Love God, and love your neighbour. Both are related to one another. If you enjoy Jesus, then you bless those around you. I'll try give you an example. So as you know I have a younger brother. And when we were younger, we would fight. I'm sure that I've told you stories, how I would provoke my brother, and then we would fight. And then mum would come home, and I would confess to my mum that I was fighting just so I wouldn't get into further trouble. Let me ask, do you think that I loved

my mum and dad if I didn't love my brother? Well, it's debatable right? I mean, if I truly loved my parents, I would love my brother. They're linked.

John the Apostle himself says something very similar, he says this,

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1 John 4:20-21 (ESV)

Loving God is the basis of our love for others. We bless others, because we love God. And if we don't show love to others, then perhaps it's because we don't enjoy God. I'm not saying that we will love others perfectly, we're all a work in progress.

But we aren't to be like the Scribes who are described here in verse 38 as those who lift themselves up, who walk around in long robes, who have the best seats in the synagogues. Who want to draw attention to themselves. They have no love for other people. But they bring others down. No, but rather, we are to choose humility. We do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. This week, what is one way that you can not only look after your own interests, but also to the interests of others? Philippians 2:3-4 (ESV)

Enjoy Jesus. Bless Others.

Jesus' Love for You

Let's talk about the final point, Jesus' love for you. When you reflect on loving Jesus, blessing others. We need to be honest with ourselves. Trying harder doesn't work. You can't force yourself to enjoy Jesus. And loving others is hard at times, loving your enemies, we have difficult relationships.

The key to enjoying Jesus, the key to loving others is this. It's accepting Jesus' love for you. It's coming to the realisation that Jesus loves you immensely. It's understanding that Jesus himself enjoys you. The key is understanding that Jesus, the good shepherd, has compassion on you, and therefore walks with you. He was willing to take on human flesh to come draw near to you. And even at your worst, he enjoys you, and was willing to sacrifice himself on the cross so that you would have eternal life. And it's when you grow in your acceptance of his love for you, that's

when you will enjoy Jesus. It's only then you will find the strength to love others, even those with whom you have a difficult relationship with.

Francis Schaeffer said, "I believe more and more that this is truly the central task of the Christian: to give the Lord the opportunity to exhibit his existence." I agree, our task is to give the Lord the opportunity to remind us of his love for us. His deep deep love for you and me.

Church Family 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.

Lord, you know that the COVID situation is getting worse in Sydney. We ask that you would help our leaders. Give them the strength that they need, give them the wisdom to make wise and godly decisions for all people. We pray for those who are struggling financially, emotionally and physically at this present time. If we can do something to help them, please give us an opportunity to reach out in love. We pray for those who are essential workers. Many of exhausted, tired, frustrated. Please look after them in this time. Remind them that what they do matters, strengthen them, and speak to them through others, encourage them.

We pray for Betty McDermaid who passed away earlier in the week. We pray for her family, Julie, Russell and Bruce we ask that you would give them a peace that transcends all understanding. May they remember all the good times that they spent with their mother. But as they mourn the loss, help them to see that Betty is walking with you now. For her to live is Christ and to die is gain. We ask that you would take Bruce and Russell safely home as well.

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

That's the end of our service. I'm going to read a blessing from Revelation 21.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21:1-4 (ESV)

Here's some hymns for today. 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 parents of the future generation. Okay, that's the end, bye for now!

Tell Out My Soul: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vz-FkqobgXY>

It All Comes Down to Jesus: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ND0YDkLzkzI>

God is Our Strength and Refuge: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bA0zJnW1R-r8>

My Lighthouse: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=reAlJKv7ptU>