

Sunday, 26 September 2021

Announcements

Well, hello everyone, hope you're doing okay at the moment. I have a couple of announcements. You may have seen Rachel's vlog earlier this week. Firstly, we have a trivia night this Friday between 7 and 8:30pm. Please RSVP by this Wednesday. It'll be on Zoom. Secondly, 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).

Challenge

Well, last week, I challenged you to receive Jesus' perfect love. How did you go with that? Well, this week, I wanted to continue that, and encourage you to look after yourself. I know maybe I don't talk about this, but there's things that we can do for self-care. Personally, I love to go for walks, and sit in the sun. So I'm going to do some of that this week. What do you like doing? I just want to encourage you to look after yourself.

Prayer

I'm going to read from John 15.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it

abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. John 15:1-11 (ESV)

I was speaking to a friend earlier this week, and I was reminded about our need to get close to Jesus. To abide in him. He is the vine, and we are the branches, and apart from him we can do nothing. Walking closely with Jesus is so important. Let's pray,

Heavenly Father, please help us to walk closely with you each day. As Jesus says, we need to abide with him, that he is the vine and we are the branches. Please help us to do that each and every day. To listen to his voice and follow him. Help us to endure through this lockdown. In Jesus name, Amen.

Scripture

We're going to read Mark 15:33-16:8

Mark 15:33 And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35 And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." 36 And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." 37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Mark 15:40 There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

Mark 15:42 And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. 45 And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. 46 And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.

Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. 6 And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." 8 And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Devotional

As we finish our time in the gospel of Mark, I wanted to ask, how do you feel about following Jesus? Do you find that following Jesus is difficult at times? As we've followed Jesus on his journey in the gospel of Mark, Jesus calls us to follow Him. As we finish up our time in Mark, maybe something that has come to your mind is this, following Jesus is hard!

Do you feel that? that following Jesus is hard? When I was in university, as a Christian, I decided that I wouldn't cheat. And yet I saw my friends cheating. And it was hard seeing them get ahead and nobody would pull them up on it. They would get away with it. You know. When you act with integrity as a Christian, following Jesus, it can be difficult. There's suffering on the way.

Today, I want to talk about one idea. It's this idea: when we go through suffering, there is glory. When we go through the darkest moments of our lives, there is glory. Just as we look at Jesus' death and resurrection, there is suffering and there is glory.

I want to talk about that because when I look at our world, we often talk about pain and pleasure. We live in a world of pain and pleasure. It's how a lot of people around us think and act. Recently, I came across an advertisement online for the army and do you know what it said? Do what you love. Help us to help you to do what you love. But compare that to ads for the military decades ago, what was it? I remember for America, it was something like, 'serve your country.' It was talking about our duty. Today, it's not about duty. It's about pain and pleasure. It's about seeking the most amount of pleasure. With this new car, you can be amazing. If only you bought a new phone, it'll be great! You'll be able to do so much. Even the television shows that we have, the reality shows, like the Bachelor, it's about finding true love! I'm not saying that we should go back to a society where we talk about duty. I'm trying to show you that pain and pleasure is the air we breathe, and water that we swim in. We live in a society that focuses on pain and pleasure.

But just because our world, our society chases after pleasure, and enjoyment, following Jesus is different. Following Jesus means that you're going to be different from your friends, you're going to be different from family who don't follow Jesus. Whilst our friends and family chase after all the treasures of the world, following Jesus means that our lives are shaped by Jesus death and resurrection. Our lives are to be shaped by suffering and glory. Just like Jesus who goes to the cross. What Jesus endures on the cross was horrible, the shame of the cross, the suffering it's all very real. And if Jesus calls us to follow him, it means that we need to also take up our cross and follow him. We need to realise and remember that following Jesus means suffering. Now I'm not saying that we should embrace pain, but what I'm saying is that we shouldn't be afraid of the suffering that we face as Christians. We shouldn't be afraid of suffering as we seek to serve and love our neighbours. Because that's what Jesus did.

I want to ask a simple application, do we remember and accept suffering as we follow Jesus? For those following Jesus in his day, that meant a real possibility of death. I suspect that's not the case for us in Australia. But suffering comes in different forms. Suffering can come in the form when we're treated differently to our other workmates. Suffering might come in the form of even losing our job? Maybe our friends and family will reject us. Whenever we go through trials, and difficult times, I wonder whether we remember and accept that it's par for the course in following Jesus? Or are we so afraid of suffering that we don't do what Jesus wants us to do? Maybe he's calling us to serve someone whom we find difficult. Or maybe he's calling us to make a difficult decision that will be us in sufferings path?

But I want to share that it doesn't end with suffering. Because Jesus doesn't just die and stay buried. He is resurrected. There is glory through suffering. I love how Jesus is resurrected, the empty tomb. We don't celebrate a dead Jesus, we worship a Jesus who has risen from the grave! We worship Jesus who has risen from the grave and ascended to heaven and is seated at the Father's right hand. I love what Paul writes in Philippians 2,

though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Philippians 2:6-11 (ESV)

Do you know what God does with Jesus after he was willing to go through the suffering of the cross? Jesus was bestowed on him the name above every name, so that every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Sometimes, I wonder why my parents called me Justin. But one of my favourite letters of the alphabet is the letter J. Why? Because if you trace what a J does, it dips low, but it gets higher than it was before. And that's what happened to Jesus. He emptied himself, became lower, but because he became lower, he gets even higher. He gets more elated than he was before. That's something incredible. Through suffering, there is glory. I think we need to remember that. We need to remember that there is glory when we follow Jesus in suffering.

Let me ask, do you hope for eternity? Our world, we love to talk about the here and now. I must admit, I get really impatient, and whenever I order something online, I want to get the package today. Like right now. I check the AUSPOST website, and I track my package every step of the way. And it's hard especially with COVID lockdown, but maybe there's a blessing in lockdown, because it reminds us that our hope isn't here and now. Our hope isn't in getting the newest latest gadget, or a bigger house, or finding the perfect relationship. Our hope isn't finding the perfect life right now, in fact if you try to find the perfect life you're never going to find it.

No. Our hope is in the resurrection. Our hope is in when Jesus returns, our hope is in the day that he calls us home. Our hope is in the new creation, whatever that may look like, where Jesus, the lamb of God is at the right hand of God. Our hope isn't in today, it's in the future. Let's cling to that today.

Let's pray,

Church Family Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for Jesus and his sacrifice for us on the cross. He is our example, that through suffering there is glory. Thank you that he was willing to humble himself even to the point of death on a cross, and thank you that you exalted him above all creation, far above every name in heaven and on earth. That at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Lord, our world tells us that we need our best life now. But as we see Jesus live his life on earth, help us to accept the suffering but hope in the glory. Help us to not be trapped or enchanted by the things of this world, like more money, more riches, but trust in your provision. Help us to seek your kingdom and your righteousness first.

Lord, we pray for our loved family members who have experienced the loss of loved ones. It is hard to say goodbye, sometimes it feels so unexpected. I know that I am personally struggling with the loss of loved members of our church family. But we know that we can say like Paul, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. To die is to be with you, to be perfected. So we ask that your Holy Spirit would provide the comfort that each one of us needs. We pray that you would remind us of your steadfast love and faithfulness. We pray that you would remind us of the hope

that we have. And help us to keep trusting in your goodness even when life doesn't make sense.

I also pray for our leaders, both of government and the church. May there be wisdom, and courage to make decisions that will seek to protect people. Help us as Christians to be understanding and submissive to our leaders especially as many are thinking about the good of people across the land. Help us to be humble, and seek the interests of others just as Jesus did with us. Help us to lay down our rights and privileges, because Jesus did that for us. And help us to remember you will exalt us at the proper time. In Jesus name,

Amen.

Closing

Well, as a reminder, this Friday night, Trivia on Zoom, we'd love you to join us. But also, please if you need a call, please call us and we can chat and pray together.

Let me give the blessing,

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.
Numbers 6:24-26 (ESV)

Amen.

Hymns

Tell Out My Soul: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qf3mgRUZkAk>

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

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

It is Well: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY5o9mP22V0>