

**DARLING DOWNS PARISH OF THE AELC**  
**TRINITY OAKLEY, ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,**  
**BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA**

6 August 2017

Bulletin for the 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

**HYMNS:** 498 304 442 284 286 621

**INTROIT:** Give thanks to the LORD! For He is good. For His mercy endures for ever.

Give thanks to the God of gods! For His mercy endures for ever.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for His mercy endures for ever; to Him who alone does miraculous things, for His mercy endures for ever; to Him who by understanding made the heavens, for His mercy endures for ever; to Him who spread out the earth on the waters, for His mercy endures for ever; to Him who made the great lights, for His mercy endures for ever; the sun to rule over the day, for His mercy endures for ever; the moon and stars to rule over the night, for His mercy endures for ever...

...who remembered us when we were humiliated, for His mercy endures for ever; who dragged us away from our enemies, for His mercy endures for ever; who gives food to every creature. For His mercy endures for ever.

Give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures for ever.

Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26

**COLLECT:** Heavenly Father, although we do not deserve Your goodness, still You provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may acknowledge Your gifts, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Lord's Supper has always been seen as a sign of unity between those who commune together at the Lord's table (1 Cor. 10:17). When Christians partake of the Lord's Supper in a church body that has a confession of faith, they thereby declare that they believe that they are one in faith with those who commune with them. Since people cannot honestly hold two differing confessions at the same time, they cannot honestly commune with those whose confession is in conflict with their own. If any do this nevertheless, they deny their own confession, and so deny Christ Himself (2 Cor. 6:14-18). **We ask visitors who are communicant members in a church not in fellowship with the AELC, or are not familiar with the *AELC Statement of Faith*, to refrain from communing today. If you have questions, please speak with the pastor after service.**

**READINGS:** Isaiah 55:1-5 Listen carefully to Me! Eat what is good.

Romans 9:1-13 Paul anguishes over the people of Israel.

Matthew 14:13-21 Jesus feeds the 5000.

**SERMON:** John 8:31-32 What is the Lutheran Church?

<sup>31</sup> Therefore Jesus said to those Jews who had become believers in Him, “If you remain in My Word, you are truly My disciples, <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

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### Are You Concerned at what Your Church Teaches?

It should be the serious concern not just of pastors and teachers but of all Christians that they know what their church believes, teaches, and confesses. In the history of the visible church, indifference to sound doctrine and practice, that is to say, indifference to the Word of God itself, inevitably leads to the loss of that precious Word. For so precious to God is His own Word that He will not allow it to be forever taken for granted, then ignored, and ultimately despised. When that happens, sooner or later, He withdraws it - God takes His Word seriously, even when people refuse to! When the pure Word goes, its saving benefit of course will go also. Woe to those who are careless with His Word so precious and life giving! Woe to those through whose indifference faith is threatened and often destroyed! Woe to those who having the pure Word and sacraments consider them nevertheless optional and thereby guarantee their eventual loss! On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it (Luke 11:28). Blessed are those who with always repentant and still faithful hearts live to learn it, preserve its saving doctrine in our midst, and share it in its truth and purity with all the world just as Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:18-20).

But still some loudly protest: “We shouldn’t be so narrow-minded, so bigoted. After all, look at all the damage that has been caused in the history of the world by religious intolerance! We should therefore let people believe whatever they want to believe, lest we reignite the bloodshed in our society and nation that we have seen so often elsewhere.”

No one should be forced to believe something that they do not want to believe. A refusal of church fellowship is not a license for violence. Indeed, both the doctrine of the Lutheran church as well as its history make the point: Faith cannot be forced, and no one should ever attempt to force faith or pure doctrine on anyone. Only the gospel can create faith; the sword only creates hypocrites. It is a sad and tragic mark in history that others have tried to force a doctrinal position - invariably a wrong one! - by means of the sword of the state. Both Roman Catholic persecutions of those they considered heretics and equally zealous and often bloody Protestant efforts along the same lines were disgraceful, sinful, and utterly contrary to the Word of God.

But what about orthodox Lutherans when they were in the majority in parts of northern Europe? When they were in the majority, when the rulers themselves were Lutherans, they never started wars or put a knife to anyone’s throat to force them to be Lutherans. And that was not because they were indifferent to false doctrine. It was rather

because they took the doctrine of the means of grace seriously: Only the gospel can create and sustain faith, and God has given the work of preaching the gospel and preserving sound doctrine to the church - not to the state. A pure doctrinal standard can be gained only by the pure preaching and teaching of God's Word; expulsion from the fellowship of an orthodox, confessional, and evangelical visible church of those who reject the Word is not the same thing at all as launching a Roman inquisition or a Protestant heresy trial followed by a burning at the stake!

Indeed, it is evidence of the indifference of so many to the truth of God's Word and the perversity of others that they defend all manner of error and then try to wrap their defence in the mantle of love. Again, it's not love by any proper definition of that word to be indifferent to teachings contrary to the Word of God, teachings which always harm faith and often destroy it.

As for those outside of the church who point to examples of bigotry and persecution as their excuse for despising the visible church and ultimately the gospel itself, one might well point out that if they want examples of bloody persecution, they will find them more readily and abundantly among their fellow unbelievers: Stalin, Hitler, Mao, and Pol Pot, just to mention a few of the more recent examples, were all unbelievers who loathed the gospel. Each in his turn shed more blood than all of the badly mistaken people put together who called themselves Christians and persecuted those who disagreed with them.

We make the point not to defend persecutions or persecutors but merely to note the intellectual dishonesty or ignorance of those who reject the gospel and a defence of sound doctrine because some abused the gospel and used it as an excuse for violence and bloodshed. The intellectually dishonest and the ignorant are happy to ignore the role of the church, of believers, in feeding the hungry, in building schools and hospitals, in tending to orphans and widows, in counselling the troubled, etc., all of which are consistent with Jesus' love and His assignment to us as Christians (Galatians 6:10). Such works are the constant occupation of those who strive to imitate in life the love of Christ in His life and death for us. But scoffers would much rather focus exclusively on the infrequent and unhappy errors of those who mistakenly thought that it was their assignment to bring by force the kingdom of heaven to earth. They are like the idol worshiper Ahab, who together with his wife, the wicked Jezebel, murdered the faithful prophets in Israel. Then, when the nation suffered the divine consequences of its sins and Ahab met the great prophet Elijah, Ahab greeted him with the words: "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" (1 Kings 18:17) - as though it was Elijah's fault that God was angry with the nation!

So, then, we will not apologise for holding to the truth of God's Word. Nor will we be ashamed to say in love to God and in love to those in error: "This is what the Lord says!" That is exactly what God Himself has called us to do (Ezekiel 2; Luke 9:26; Revelation 22:12-20).

*Welcome to all with us today! May God bless our worship of Him by His serving of us!*

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Weekly sermons and bulletins are available at [www.aelc.org.au](http://www.aelc.org.au).

**Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.**

## COMING SERVICES

13 August 10 Pentecost	20 August 11 Pentecost	27 August 12 Pentecost
8.30am TMBA HC 8.30am OAK PR JZ 10.00am GRN PR JZ 10.30am AUB HC	8.30am OAK HC 8.30am TMBA PR JZ 10.00am GRN HC 10.30am AUB PR JZ	8.00am Bible Study & 9.00am HC TMBA 8.30am OAK LR 9.00am GRN LR 10.30am AUB HC
<b>Sunday, 13 August</b>		
READINGS: Job 38:4-18;	Romans 10:5-17;	Matthew 14:22-33
HYMNS: 272 310 791 (839 840) 458 OAK & GRN: 403 153 155 36		
<b>Sunday, 20 August</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8;	Romans 11:1-2a, 13-15, 28-32;	Matthew 15:21-28
HYMNS: 507 401 151 368 315 426 TMBA & AUB: 403 153 155 36		

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tuesday, 8 August, 7.30pm. Men's Fellowship at Oakey. Opening Devotion: D. Ziebell.

As the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation draws near, the time has come to begin preparations for this celebration. On Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, we will be holding a combined AELC Reformation Day service at St John's Aubigny. Pastor Ohlson will be the guest preacher, and Pastor Ziebell intends on presenting a short paper after lunch. If anyone has any suggestions on how else we can celebrate, please let pastor know (hymn singing evening, sacred concert, etc).