

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

26 November 2017

Bulletin for the Last Sunday of the Church Year

HYMNS: 502 169 479 839 840 492

INTROIT: Come! Let us shout joyfully to the LORD! Let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation!

Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving! Let us shout joyfully to Him with songs!

For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods.

In His hand are the unexplored depths of the earth, and the peaks of the mountains belong to Him.

The sea is His, and He has made it, and His hands have formed the dry land.

Come, let us worship and bow down! Let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.

Psalm 95:1-7a

COLLECT: Eternal God, merciful Father, You have appointed Your Son as judge of the living and the dead. Enable us to wait for the day of His return with our eyes fixed on the kingdom prepared for Your own from the foundation of the world; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24 "I Myself will search for My sheep and look after them."

1 Corinthians 15:20-28 "In Christ all will be made alive."

Matthew 25:31-46 The sheep and the goats.

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.**

SERMON: Thy Kingdom Come Matthew 25:31-46

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. ³² All nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them from one another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will have the sheep stand at His right but the goats at His left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those at His right, ‘Come, you whom My Father has blessed! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the time when the world was created!’ ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave Me a drink. I was a stranger, and you took Me into your homes; ³⁶ naked, and you gave Me something to wear; sick, and you looked after Me; in prison, and you visited Me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous ones will ask Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You a drink?’ ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You into our homes, or naked and give You something to wear?’ ³⁹ When did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?’

⁴⁰ “Then the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I tell you, anything you have done for one of My brothers here, even the least important of them, you have done for Me.’

⁴¹ “Then He will say to those at His left, ‘Go away from Me, you cursed ones, into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!’ ⁴² For I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; thirsty, and you did not give Me a drink; ⁴³ a stranger, and you did not take Me into your homes; naked, and you did not give Me anything to wear; sick and in prison, and you did not look after Me.’

⁴⁴ “Then they also will ask, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not help You?’

⁴⁵ “Then He will answer them, ‘Truly, I tell you, anything you have not done for one of these, even the least important of them, you have not done for Me.’

⁴⁶ “Then these will go away to everlasting punishment, but the righteous ones to everlasting life.”

The Last Day and Final Judgment

A Last Day will most surely come, and on that day Christ will return visibly just as He promised (Matthew 26:64; Mark 13:26; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13). When Christ does return, all the dead will rise and all will appear before His throne for judgment (John 5:28-29; Matthew 25:32; Acts 24:15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). On that day all will be seen with bodies and souls reunited. We may summarise the Last Day and the final judgment this way:

1. A day is certainly coming on which all human history will end, on which day Christ will return visibly and all the dead will rise with bodies and souls reunited to appear before Him for judgment (John 5:22-29; 1 Corinthians 15:52).

2. At that judgment those who have believed the gospel will have their good works that they did as a result of faith put on display for all to see; those who rejected the gospel will be publicly condemned and their failure to produce fruits of faith will be presented as evidence of their unbelief (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28,29; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12).

3. Then those thus judged will go to their reward, the believers to an eternal bliss in heaven and the unbelievers to an eternal torment with the devil and his angels in hell (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 9:26; John 3:16-36; 6:35-65; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

It is important to note that in so many of these passages, which speak of the judgment on the Last Day, our works in this life receive prominent mention. For that's the nature of a courtroom: not one's invisible faith is at issue but the visible works are the evidence introduced at trial. To be sure, hypocrites and unbelievers produced works too that on the

outside looked very good. But the Judge of the heart sees and knows if those works were the fruits and the results of faith in Him or if they had some other motive. Only those visible works that are the results of invisible faith are praised.

We see that with special clarity in the great parable of the last judgment in Matthew 25:31-46, our Gospel for today. Notice how Jesus addresses those rewarded with heaven. He calls them to enter "*the kingdom prepared for you from the time when the world was created,*" that is, before they were ever born or had done anything to merit heaven. Unlike a human court in which the evidence is introduced and then the verdict pronounced, the reverse happens on the Last Day: first comes the verdict, then the evidence that demonstrates the justice of the verdict - in the heart was faith, in the life was the proof of it.

Then notice the verdict over those condemned. They are sentenced to eternal punishment "*prepared for the Devil and his angels.*" It was never God's good and gracious will that they go there; it was intended only for the devil and his angels. But the condemned go there - not because they never did anything that appeared good in the eyes of the world but because "*you have not done [it] for Me.*" That is, whatever visible works they may have had, they did not come about as a result of a relationship with Christ - as visible proofs of an invisible faith.

To underscore the point that it is not the works that save us but that they are introduced at the last judgment as visible proofs of an invisible faith, we note what Jesus says also in John 5:19-30. Read the entire section and you will see that eternal life is clearly the gift of God through faith that embraces the Saviour. Then note especially verse 29 when He speaks of the resurrection and judgment on the Last Day. He says, "*Those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*" This Jesus says after He has already made it clear that eternal life is a gift. However, in the judgment that gift received in faith is shown as having results in life, namely, the doing of good.

Notice too in all of these descriptions of the last judgment no mention is made of the sins of those entering heaven. Why not? They have all been forgiven! What point is there in mentioning them? They have been washed away in the blood of the Lamb, washing which the believers enjoyed day after day in this life and which they will enjoy fully and perfectly in heaven (Revelation 7:9-17). Thus, while the faithful mourn in repentance their whole life long over their sins and failures to perfectly reflect their faith, at the last judgment all such mourning will end. For there will be no more sins and no more temptations to sin in heaven but only perfect joy over the redemption won for them by Christ and received by them here in faith.

What a day that will be for each believer! Just think of it: All that was suffered silently and without any comfort save that of the gospel itself will be exposed to the light for praise from the Saviour. All that was done without the slightest hint of gratitude in this life will hear the praise of God before the whole world. All that was done simply because it was in accord with God's Word but that at the time seemed so pointless and in vain, all of it will receive from Him for whom it was done the highest acclamation. Oh to be sure, none of these things were ever done perfectly or even with a perfect motive, but at the last judgment that won't matter. The work will be held up as a perfect jewel, a diamond, and a sapphire, fit only for the praises of the Lamb who sits on the throne.

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

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com

Weekly sermons and bulletins are available at www.aelc.org.au.

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

COMING SERVICES

| 3 December 1 Advent | 10 December 2 Advent | 17 December 3 Advent |
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| 10.00am HC Parish Service GRN and Advent lunch. | 8.30am TMBA HC 8.30am OAK PR JZ Harvest 10.00am GRN PR JZ Harvest 10.30am AUB HC | 8.30am OAK HC 8.30am TMBA PR JZ Harvest 10.00am GRN HC 10.30am AUB PR JZ Harvest 7.30pm Carols Evening OAK |
| Sunday, 3 December | | |
| READINGS: Isaiah 64:1-9; | 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; | Mark 11:1-10 |
| HYMNS: 7 19 10 61 287 11 | | |
| Sunday, 10 December | | |
| READINGS: Isaiah 40:1-11; | 2 Peter 3:8-14; | Mark 1:1-8 |
| HYMNS: 12 6 431 157 (159) 739 OAK & GRN: (to be announced) | | |

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, 3 December. Could each family please provide a shared lunch and dessert for Advent? Also, please bring along glue, scissors, sticky tape, etc., for the craft activity.