

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

24 December 2017

Bulletin for the 4th Sunday in Advent

HYMNS: 2 33 746 627

INTROIT: Let me sing about the merciful acts of the LORD for ever! With my mouth I shall proclaim Your faithfulness to all generations.

For I have been saying: "Mercy will be built up for ever. You will establish Your faithfulness in the heavens."

You have said: "I have made a Covenant with My chosen one. I have **sworn** an oath **to** My servant **David**: "I shall establish **your Descendant** for ever, and I shall build up **your throne** for all generations."

Let the heavens praise Your wonders, O LORD, and also Your faithfulness, in the assembly of the holy ones!

Once in a vision You said to Your devout people: "I have granted help to a Warrior. I have raised up One chosen from the people.

"I have found David, My Servant. I have anointed Him with My holy oil.

"Therefore with Him My hand will be secure. Indeed, My arm will make Him strong.

"No enemy will deceive Him, and no wicked person will subdue Him.

"I shall crush His enemies before Him, and I shall strike down those who hate Him.

"My faithfulness and mercy will be with Him, and in My name His horn will be raised high.

"I shall extend His power over the sea and His right hand over the rivers.

"He **will call to** Me: "You are My **Father**, my God, and the Rock of My salvation.'

"Yes, I myself shall make Him **the Firstborn**. He will be **the Most High to the kings of the earth**.

"I shall keep My mercy for Him for ever, and My Covenant will stand firm for Him.

"I shall set His Offspring up for ever and His throne like the days of heaven.

Psalm 89:1-5, 19-29

COLLECT: Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins that weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 "Your house and your kingdom will stand for ever."

Romans 16:25-27 "To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be glory forever!"

Luke 1:26-38 The angel appears to Mary.

SERMON: Luke 1:26-38 God acts according to His Word

Three Misconceptions About Christmas

1. The X Stands for Christ

We've all seen the signs wishing people a Merry Xmas. What does the X stand for in Xmas? Some claim that the X stands for Christ, while others say that this is another attempt at removing Christ from the culture? Which view is correct? In a sense, both are.

Christ is a title given to the Lord Jesus to signify that He is the Messiah. In Greek, this word is *Christos* (χριστος). Since the first Greek letter of this title (the letter chi) looks like an x in English, some have used it as an abbreviation for Christ. Many have claimed that this practice dates back to the first century, and there is solid evidence that shows this was practiced in the sixteenth century, perhaps as a cost-saving measure for those using the printing press. However, those using the abbreviation would still pronounce the X as Christ.

There is no question that many use the X today for the very purpose of eliminating Christ from the holiday that bears His title. Some may even do this in ignorance. Secularists have been working hard to remove any mention of God, Jesus, and Christianity from our culture. Should we expect anything less from those who don't know the Lord?

So what is a Christian to do? Can we use the abbreviation, or must we always write out Christmas? It is not sinful to use abbreviations, but it would definitely be wrong if a Christian used Xmas because he or she is ashamed of Jesus Christ (Luke 9:26). Christmas definitely looks better than Xmas, and as for cost-saving measures, that should not even come into the equation today!

2. Jeremiah 10 Forbids the Use of Christmas Trees

Some Christians have cited the tenth chapter of Jeremiah as evidence that we should not use trees in our Christmas celebrations. However, one merely needs to take a close look at the text to see that this is not the case: ¹ *Listen to the Word that the LORD has spoken to you, family of Israel!* ² *This is what the LORD has said: "Do not learn the ways of the nations, and do not be dismayed by the signs in the sky! For the nations are dismayed at them."* ³ *For the customs of the other peoples are worthless. For someone has cut down a tree from the forest. A carpenter's hands use a woodworking*

tool to prepare it. ⁴ *They decorate it with silver and gold. They use nails and hammers to make it firm so that it will not wobble.* ⁵ *Their idols are like a scarecrow in a cucumber patch, and they cannot speak. They certainly have to be carried, because they cannot stride about. Do not be afraid of them! For they cannot do any harm, and they cannot do any good, either,”* (Jeremiah 10:1–5)

Although there seem to be some similarities to a Christmas tree in this passage, the context reveals that there is really nothing here that forbids their usage. The first 16 verses of this chapter are all about how idols are completely worthless compared to God.

These are instructions to the Israelites that they should not adopt the idolatrous ways of the Gentiles who often carved idols out of the trees they had cut down. Now, if a Christmas tree is ever elevated to the point where it becomes an idol or a stumbling block to worshipping the Lord, then it would be wrong. However, many people choose to use an evergreen tree as a reminder of the eternal life offered by Jesus Christ to all who will receive Him as their Lord and Saviour.

3. We Should Not Celebrate Christmas

Some people have argued that Christians should not celebrate Christmas because it was originally a pagan holiday. Others say that it shouldn't be celebrated because it is never commanded in Scripture. After all, during the Last Supper, Jesus instructed His followers to commemorate His death, but nowhere does the Bible instruct Christians to commemorate His birth.

Christmas is a time when Christians celebrate and remember Jesus Christ coming into this world to save sinners. December 25 is not necessarily the date that Jesus was born, but this does not detract from the fact that it is very important to remember Jesus and what He did for us. While we are not commanded to celebrate the birth of Christ, we do see precedent in Scripture. The angels and shepherds praised God for sending His Son into the world. Christians are definitely permitted to do this, and every day we should thank God for Christ stepping into this world!

Moreover, reminders are stressed in Scripture, such as the account of the 12 stones in Joshua 4:5-7, which were to serve as “a memorial to the children of Israel forever.”

Sadly, Israel eventually forgot, and they embraced worldly ideas. This is one of the main reasons that Christians should celebrate Christmas: that we will never forget what God has done for us.

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.

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

COMING SERVICES

25 December Christmas	31 December New Year's Eve	1 January 2018 New Year's Day
8.00am TMBA HC PZ 8.00am OAK PR JZ 9.30am GRN PR JZ 9.45am AUB HC PZ Please note the change of times	8.30am OAK HC 8.30am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.00am GRN HC	9.30am AUB HC
Monday, 25 December		
READINGS: Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-12; John 1:1-14		
HYMNS: 34 626 623 624 (622) 26 OAK & GRN: 34 23 part 1 23 part 2 29		
Sunday, 31 December		
READINGS: Isaiah 30:8-15; Romans 8:31b-39; Luke 12:35-40		
HYMNS: 22 552 181 413 292 559		

THE LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE

M: The virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a Son,

C: and she will call His name 'Immanuel' which means, 'God is with us.'

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You that You have sent Your Son Jesus to be with us and to save us. Teach us to live as Your people, and to serve you joyfully. Amen.

