

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

4 March 2018

Bulletin for the Third Sunday in Lent

HYMNS: 171 188 54 53 335 754

INTROIT: The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse above displays what His hands have made.

One day pours out information to the next, and one night announces knowledge to the next.

There is no talking, there are no words, and their voices are not audible.

Their measuring line has gone out through all the earth, and their messages to the end of the world. He has set a tent in them for the sun, and it comes out of its bridal-chamber like a bridegroom. It rejoices like a champion to run its course.

It rises from one end of the heavens, its turning point is at their edges, and nothing is hidden from its heat.

The Instruction of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul. The Reminder of the LORD is reliable, making the simple person wise.

The Directions of the LORD are correct, making the heart rejoice. The Commandment of the LORD is pure, giving light to the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever. **The Decisions of the LORD are true and** altogether **righteous.**

They are more desirable than gold, even much pure gold. Moreover, they are sweeter than honey, than honey from honeycomb.

They also warn your servant. There is great reward in keeping them.

Who understands his errors? Declare me exempt from hidden faults!

Restrain Your servant also from presumptuous sins! Let them not have control over me! Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great rebellion.

May the words from my mouth and the thinking of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock, and my Redeemer!

Psalm 19

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.**

COLLECT: O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS: Exodus 20:1-17 The Ten Commandments.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31 "We preach a crucified Christ."

John 2:13-25 Jesus drives the moneychangers from the temple.

SERMON: John 2:13-17 The temple of the Lord

Good Works are not necessary as a cause of salvation, but they are necessary

All thanks and praise to God every moment of our lives that our salvation is not caused - no, not in the least part - by our good works! For if it were, every moment of our lives would carry over it the verdict of *guilty* and the sentence of death and hell. No, our salvation is - and we cannot say it too often or too emphatically - entirely the work of Christ on the cross, just as the faith that embraces Christ's work for us is a miracle created in us by God through the Gospel.

Nevertheless, that doesn't mean that we have been saved to sin or that the struggle to live lives that flow from the love of Christ is optional. Good works are not necessary as a cause of salvation, but they are necessary. The good work of hearing God's Word commanded in the Third Commandment is so vital and necessary because our faith cannot survive without it, and good works that serve our neighbours (the Fourth through Tenth Commandments) are necessary because they need them and because God has commanded them.

It is just as Jesus said: Ours must be lives lived under the cross, not just lives that could be, should be, might be, or sometimes are under the cross. A life under the cross, a life of self-denial for the sake of Jesus and His Word, is a life in which 1. I struggle against the inborn and deeply rooted inclination of my sinful flesh to put self first; 2. I seek to put the Word of God and the best interest of those I am able to serve before my own wants and self-interest, whether that's convenient or not, easy or not; 3. I struggle against the tendency in my own heart to the self-righteous notion that I am good enough the way I am and need not struggle anymore against my favourite sins or the favourite sin of putting myself first; 4. I struggle even against the opposite tendency to despair when I discover how far away I still am from the kind of life God wants me to live. It is a life in which I battle against despair of His love and mercy when I suffer pain and loss in life, either because of my own sins or the sins of others. In such despair one turns his back on the Word of God and the saving merit of Christ just as much as that one does who trusts in whole or in part on his own works to gain salvation.

All of that is part and parcel of the Christian life, of living under the cross. And again, it is not optional. To refuse the cross is to refuse Christ, who both calls us to it

and sends it in order to keep us ever mindful of the fundamental truth that He alone is Saviour. For how can we look at even a moment of our lives and imagine that we have done it all and are already good enough to gain heaven? Paul, as his life was drawing to a close, confessed that he had not yet gotten to that point and knew he wouldn't until he went from the cross to the crown in heaven (Philippians 3:12-14).

It is with this very difficulty and the pain of living under the cross in mind that Jesus calls us to Himself to give us both comfort and aid as we follow after Him under the cross. He speaks to us so tenderly: "*Come to Me, all you who are working hard and carrying a heavy burden; and I shall give you rest!*"²⁹ *Take My yoke on you and learn from Me! For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*³⁰ *For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light,*" (Matthew 11:28-30).

How well Jesus understands us! We focus on *our* pain and *our* difficulty. He brings us to focus on *Him* and *His* Word. The sinful flesh will complain that it's all too hard and that it is about time that someone served *me*. However, Jesus gives the new man - the Christian nature that comes from gospel-created faith - strength and courage in His Word. The 'rest' of which Jesus speaks is the rest that comes to the struggling soul aware of its imperfections and failures; it is the rest of forgiveness in the Gospel. It is the rest that renews and reinvigorates us for renewed struggle. Likewise, it is the assurance from the Gospel that one day the struggle will end in the victory that Christ has won for us by His struggle, His cross, His suffering and death for us and for our salvation. The assurance of both kinds of rest, the rest of forgiveness now and the rest assured at the end of this short life's battle, make His yoke easy for us and His burden light. After all, He has not left us alone. By His presence with us in His Word and sacrament He carries our cross with us. Indeed, He permits nothing heavier than what we can bear and nothing more than what is intended for our good and our strengthening. What athlete does not strain and sweat in order to gain strength and become better at his sport? Even a tree gains strength from being buffeted by the wind. Just so, Jesus assures us that the struggle is itself a blessing. For if we had no struggle we would quickly forget our need of His constant aid. Had we no regrets and nothing to repent of, we would soon forget the greatness of His love in bringing us salvation at so great a cost to Himself, the cost of His own cross.

So then, in love to Him, in response to His love for us, we strive to live lives that are pleasing to Him, lives that are rich in good works.

What then is a good work? God does not leave us in doubt on the definition of works that are good in His eyes. For a work to be good in the eyes of God, 1. The work must first be done in accord with the Law of God and not contrary to it. 2. It will be done in grateful thanksgiving to God for the gift of salvation - not to earn or merit that which only God can give as a gift of grace on account of the merit of Christ. 3. Generally speaking, and this is most evident in the Second Table of the Law (the Fourth through Tenth Commandments), the work will be done for the benefit of others, not just for what I can get in return. 4. It will be done in the joyful expectation that God accepts it and is pleased with it. That expectation is justified even though none of our works are in themselves ever perfect, because they are done in connection with Christ; that is, whatever stains them - and us - is covered by the blood of our Saviour who forgives even the unintentional stains on our good works.

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

7 March 4th mid-week Lenten Service	11 March 4 Lent	14 March 5th mid-week Lenten Service
7.30pm TMBA Vespers	8.30am TMBA HC 8.30am OAK LR 9.00am GRN LR 10.30amAUB HC	7.30pm GRN Vespers
Wednesday, 7 March		
READINGS: Hebrews 10:5-12; Luke 22:66-23:1; Mark 15:1; John 18:28; Matthew 27:3-10; John 18:28-32; Luke 23:2-3; Matthew 27:11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-4; John 18:28-38; Luke 23:4-16		
HYMNS: 51 61 790 48 v.3		
Sunday, 11 March		
READINGS: Numbers 21:4-9;	Ephesians 2:1-10;	John 3:14-21
HYMNS: 791 852 271 (162 294) 368		

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wednesday, 7 March, 10.00am. Women's Guild at Oakey. Opening Devotion: Carolyn. Key Word: Humble. Item of Interest: Something beginning with "A"