

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

11 August 2019

Bulletin for the 9th Sunday after Pentecost

HYMNS: 524 200 149 528

INTROIT: Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people that He has chosen for His own inheritance!
The LORD looks down from heaven. He sees all the descendants of Adam.
From His dwelling-place He gazes on all the inhabitants of the earth.
The One who forms their hearts individually is the One who pays attention to everything that they do.
No king is victorious because of a large army. No warrior saves himself by great strength.
A horse is a vain hope for deliverance. Its great strength will not save anyone.
Look! The eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who wait in hope for His mercy, that He may rescue their souls from death and to keep them alive during a famine.
Our souls have been waiting for the LORD. He is our Help and our Shield.
For our hearts rejoice in Him, because we trust in His holy name.
Let Your mercy, O LORD, be on us, even as we hope in You!

Psalm 33:12-22

COLLECT: Almighty and merciful God, it is by Your grace that we live as Your people, and offer You acceptable service. Grant that we may walk by faith, and not by sight, in the way that leads to eternal life; 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: Genesis 15:1-6 The Lord promises Abram many descendants
Hebrews 11:1-16 The faith of Abraham and others
Luke 12:22-34 Do not be anxious

SERMON: Luke 12:22-34 Stop worrying!

Glory Versus the Cross

by Gene Edward Veith¹

Mother Teresa was a living saint, according to the popular mind, compassionately caring for the sick and dying and projecting a love that brought cynical secularists to their knees. After her death, the Vatican put her on a fast track to sainthood. But then a book on her life published some of her personal writings that showed Mother Teresa was wracked with spiritual depression and a sense that God had abandoned her.

The atheist Christopher Hitchens, who had earlier written a book attacking Mother Teresa for her pro-life views, crowed at the news. See, he wrote in Newsweek, she didn't believe in this Christianity stuff at all. But even many who admired her were flabbergasted that this saintly woman who talked so much about serving Christ had such trouble feeling his presence. Maybe she wasn't a saint after all.

For me, though, the news of Mother Teresa's dark night of the soul made me think that maybe she really was a saint. Not in the Roman Catholic sense of a spiritual superhero. But in the biblical sense of a sinner whose hope is in Christ and not in herself. She did not follow her feelings, trust in her good works, or enjoy mystical experiences. Rather, she walked by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

Luther was like that. He was subject to titanic glooms, as the poet Francis Thompson called them, times of spiritual struggle, terror, and despair. But Luther said that these inner trials drove him to trust the Word of God, not his feelings, and to cling not to his experiences but to the objective cross of Jesus Christ.

In writing about these matters, Luther identified what would become our contemporary culture's blind spot when it comes to spiritual matters. He distinguished between what he called a "theology of glory" and "the theology of the cross."

A theology of glory expects total success, finding all the answers, winning all the battles, and living happily ever after. The theology of glory is all about my strength, my power, and my works. A theologian of glory expects his church to be perfect and always to grow. If a theologian of glory gets sick, he expects God to heal him.

And if he experiences failure and weakness, if his church has problems and if he is not healed, then he is often utterly confused, questioning the sufficiency of his faith and sometimes questioning the very existence of God.

But, Luther pointed out, when God chose to save us, He did not follow the way of glory. He did not come as a great hero-king, defeating his enemies and establishing a mighty kingdom on earth. Rather, He came as a baby laid in an animal trough, a man of sorrows with no place to lay His head. And He saved us by the weakness and shame of dying on a cross. Those who follow Him will have crosses of their own: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

Not that we have to suffer for our own sins. But faith in the Gospel, putting our trust in what Christ accomplished for us on His cross, entails

¹ Dr. Gene Edward Veith is provost and professor of literature emeritus at Patrick Henry College and director of the Cranach Institute at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

acknowledging our own weakness, the failure of our own works, the complete abnegation of our glory.

And as we find ourselves in the cross of Jesus, we can find Him in the far lesser crosses that we have to bear. When Christians suffer, according to Luther, Christ is with us in our suffering. Spiritual depression can drive us closer to Him, who knows better than anyone what it feels like to be wracked with physical pain, to be abandoned and rejected by those He loved, to be forsaken by His Father.

In Luther’s terms, Christ is “hidden” in our sufferings. If a child is hiding in the room, we do not see him, but he is nevertheless there. Similarly, in our sufferings, we do not perceive the hidden Christ, but He is nevertheless truly present, to be apprehended by faith.

To be sure, after the cross, Christ was glorified. God raised Him from the dead, and He ascended to God’s right hand. And Christ will come again “in glory” to judge the living and the dead. And we too are raised to new life. We too will be glorified in the eternal life to come, where we really will experience victory, have all of our problems washed away, and enjoy complete understanding.

But our access to that glory is through the cross. “To God alone be glory,” we say. Notice how the critical word in those Reformation slogans is “alone” (*sola*). God does have glory in Himself. But we do not.

Even in the secular spheres, many are after the theology of glory, expecting success on the job, perfect families, and either self-help remedies or government action to solve all our problems. But such people today cannot handle suffering. We would rather die than suffer. We would rather be killed than suffer. Send for Dr. Kevorkian!

But the truth of Christianity is evident in that everyone does, in fact, have problems, struggles, and sufferings. And this can be their point of contact for Christ, who on the cross not only “was wounded for our transgressions” but also “has borne our griefs” and “carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:4–5).

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

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

Email him at pziebell@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

18 August 10 Pentecost	25 August 11 Pentecost	1 September 12 Pentecost
8.30am OAK HC 8.30am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.00am GRN HC 9.00am MINDEN LR	8.30am OAK LR 8.30am TMBA LR 9.30am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC	8.00am Bible Study & 9.00am HC TMBA 8.30am OAK LR 9.00am GRN LR 10.30am AUB HC 9.00am MARBURG LR
Sunday, 18 August		
READINGS: Jeremiah 23:16-29; Hebrews 11:17-12:3; Luke 12:49-56		
HYMNS: 463 197 376 (789 294) 266		
Sunday, 25 August		
READINGS: Isaiah 66:18-23; Hebrews 12:4-29; Luke 13:22-30		
HYMNS: 526 178 492 (311 284) 187		

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DOWNNS PARISH

Tuesday, 13 August, 7.30pm. Men’s Fellowship at Oakey. Opening devotion: Robert.

Bible Studies:

Greenwood: Friday, 23 August.

Aubigny/Oakey: Friday, 30 August at Oakey.

Toowoomba, Sunday, 1 September.

MARBURG PARISH

Thursday, 22 August, 10.00am. Bible Study at Lowood. We will be studying the 2nd chapter of James. Please bring something for a shared morning tea.

FORWARD ANNOUNCEMENT: Saturday, 7 September, 10.00am. CoC/Sem. Committee meeting at Troys Road.