

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

27 December 2020

The First Sunday after Christmas

HYMNS: 14 23 Part 2 20 741 290 508

INTROIT: Praise the LORD! I shall give thanks to the LORD with all my heart, in the company of upright people and in the congregation.

The works of the LORD are great. They are studied by all who delight in them. His work is splendid and majestic, and His righteousness endures for ever. He has caused His miraculous acts to be remembered. The LORD is gracious and compassionate.

He has given food to those who fear Him. He will remember His Covenant for ever.

He has shown His powerful works to His people by giving to them the inheritance of the nations.

The works of His hands are faithful and just. All His Precepts are trustworthy.

They are firm for ever and ever. They have been made in truth and uprightness.

He has sent redemption to His people. He has ordained His Covenant for ever. His name is holy and awesome.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. All who observe His Precepts have good understanding. His praise endures for ever.

Psalm 111

COLLECT: O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him, who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS: Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3 Zion's Coming Salvation.

Galatians 4:4-7 Sons and Heirs.

Luke 2:22-40 Jesus Presented at the Temple.

SERMON: Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3 CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY

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.**

Adopted as God's Children

Our minds are constructed by the Creator in such a way that we learn better from having one thing compared to another. In order to understand something unknown or unfamiliar, it helps us to have it compared with something more familiar and better known to us. For example, to give us a picture of how nervous someone was before having to get up and give an important speech, a person may say of him, "He was pacing back and forth like a caged lion."

Comparisons using 'like' or 'as' are technically called similes. If you extend a simile by adding a few more details and making a little descriptive story out of it, you get a parable. Jesus often taught in parables ("the kingdom of heaven is like"), and Paul in the first few verses of Galatians 4 uses a parable to teach a bit more fully the relationship of Old Testament Jewish believers to the Mosaic Law.

His illustration is taken from something in everyday life, namely, the matter of wills and inheritance. Paul explains, "*What I am saying is that, while the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he is the owner of everything. Rather, he is under guardians and managers until the time set by his father*" (verses 1-2).

A millionaire's son may in fact be the owner of everything that his father possesses, but the wise father is not going to turn everything over to his son until he's capable of managing things properly. The minor son first needs to go through a period of training and disciplining in which he does not look much different from a slave or an ordinary household servant. Uncomfortable as it may be, that period of training, limited to the time frame set by the father, is of great value for the prospective heir.

Now comes the parable's point of comparison. Paul relates this everyday scene of the minor heir under the guardianship of a household servant to the Old Testament Jews in their relationship to the Mosaic Law. He explains, "*We also, when we were children, were enslaved under the elementary principles of the world. However, when the time had fully come, God sent out His Son... that we might receive adoption as His sons*" (verses 3-5).

The heir's receiving the adoption, meaning the full rights of sons, is not something brought about, or effected, by the temporary training period. Receiving the inheritance rests solely and completely on the father's activity of fulfilling his promise. So too, the Mosaic Law was not the vehicle through which God brought about His great blessing of salvation; that came, rather, in God the Father's good time, through the fulfillment of the promise of a Saviour for all nations, given much earlier to Abraham.

Note how completely Paul describes God's saving activity: "*However, when the time had fully come, God sent out His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive adoption as His sons.*"

"*God sent out His Son*" - the Saviour of the world was none other than the true God. God's Son was "*born of a woman*" - the Saviour of the world deigned to be born of a virgin and become also true man. He was "*born under law, to redeem those who were under the Law*" - though He was true God, the Giver of the Law, yet willingly as true man He put himself "*under the Law*" that He might keep it for "*those under the Law*" and thus earn for them the righteousness that a just and holy God properly expects and demands.

It is important to note that in these verses the term "Law" does not have the article the either time it is used, as though it were limited just to the Mosaic Law that has been under discussion. It's broader than that. "Law" here refers to everything that God rightly demands of all people. The Saviour's work was not restricted to serving just His Jewish countrymen. It included the "all nations" envisioned in the promise given to Abraham and hence included also the Galatians. That is why we must not restrict Paul's use of "we" to himself and other Jews when he now goes on to state that the purpose of God's sending His Son as Saviour was "that we might receive adoption as His sons. The pronoun "we" is an inclusive term.

Paul includes the Galatians when he here speaks of the blessings of full sonship. This becomes evident in the next two verses. Paul addresses the Galatians directly in the second person, saying, "*Moreover, because you are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries, 'Abba! Father!'*"

Continuing to address the Galatians directly in the second person, Paul even switches to the singular pronoun to assure each Galatian individually of the blessings brought by the Saviour sent at God's good time. He gives them this assurance: "*Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son. Moreover, since you are a son, you are also an heir, through God.*" In Christ the Galatians, as dear children talking to Abba, their dear Father, can confidently address God as sons and heirs who are sure of their inheritance, an eternal place with God in heaven.

Welcome to all worshipping with us today! Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 46333604 or 0407583922.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaelc@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

1 January 2021 New Year's Day (Circumcision & Name of Jesus)	3 January 2 Christmas	10 January 1 Epiphany (The Baptism of Jesus)
9.30am AUB HC	8.30am OAK LR 8.30am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.30am AUB HC 9.00am MARBURG LR	8.30am OAK LR 8.30am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC
Friday, 1 January 2021		
READINGS: Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 2:21		
HYMNS: 554 36 277 852 848 609		
Sunday, 3 January		
READINGS: 1 Kings 3:4-15; Ephesians 1:3-14; Luke 2:40-52		
HYMNS: 39 147 165 (839 840) 323		
Sunday, 10 January		
READINGS: Genesis 1:1-15; Romans 6:1-11; Mark 1:4-11		
HYMNS: 823 13 831 (152 842) 279		

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please take home with you a copy of Pastor's Christmas Letter and Calendar for 2021.

The last two issues of the Good News magazine for 2020 are now available.

There are extra copies of these issues if you had not previously ordered one.