

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

7 March 2021
The 3rd Sunday in Lent

HYMNS: 504 54 188 779 294 75

INTROIT: The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament 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, and there are no words, and their voices are not audible.

Their measuring line has gone out into 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. Like a champion, it rejoices 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 Law 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. And they are sweeter than honey, than honey from honeycomb.

Your servant is also warned by them. 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

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.

SERMON: Exodus 20:2-3 THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

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.**

READINGS: Exodus 20:1-17 The Ten Commandments.
1 Corinthians 1:18-25 Christ crucified, God's power and wisdom.
John 2:13-22 Jesus clears the temple and gives a sign.

Christian Parenting in the Social Media Age

When thinking about the internet, social media in particular, the Roman road analogy is useful. Built with the nefarious intent to move Roman armies to conquer the known world, the infrastructure nevertheless enabled much good, especially the spread of the Gospel.

Roman armies designed and built roads primarily to move their armies throughout the ancient world to conquer and subjugate people and nations. The road system was a remarkable feat of engineering, using concrete made with volcanic ash and with an elevated surface of tightly packed cut stones, cambered for drainage. Markers - milestones - placed every 1,000 steps allowed army commanders to keep track of their progress. These paved roads stretched more than 80,000 kilometres, crisscrossing Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

Many of those roads survive to this day, having long outlasted the empire whose imperialism prompted their construction.

The roads built for armies also expanded commerce and travel. More significantly, Christian missionaries used the roads to carry the Good News of salvation to the lost. The apostle Paul and fellow missionaries travelled countless miles on those roads in their missionary journeys. The Roman Empire is long gone, but the church thrives two millennia after the empire that built the roads.

In our day, another extraordinary feat of engineering, the internet, connects people around the world, with an estimated 4.5 billion users worldwide, most through social media.

Facebook is the most popular platform, with 2.7 billion active users, including 1.6 billion daily users. YouTube has 2 billion active users, followed by WhatsApp (owned by Facebook), Facebook Messenger, WeChat (Chinese mobile app) and Instagram (also owned by Facebook). Each of these six platforms has more than 1 billion active users. Other platforms - TikTok, Snapchat, Reddit, Twitter and Pinterest - have hundreds of millions of active users.

Unlike the Roman roads, which were built over hundreds of years, social media has reached every corner of the globe in less than a generation. But like the Roman roads, social media can be a useful means for carrying out the Great Commission - provided users are informed of the pitfalls.

Social media is an insidious thief, stealing from Christian families barely aware it is happening. It robs families of the time and attention that belong to one another. The theft is intentional; social media deliberately breaks down our intellectual filters, making us susceptible

to advertising pitches and ideological manipulation, and drawing us ever deeper into its clutches.

That may be a tough pill to swallow for adults who enjoy the blessings of social media. Christians use social media for mutual encouragement and admonition, sharing Scriptures and devotions, and celebrating milestones in the lives of loved ones. During the pandemic, churches have taken advantage of social media - Facebook and YouTube in particular - for online worship services, proclaiming God's Law and Gospel directly into the homes of parishioners when in-person worship is not feasible.

But social media's stealth means followers of Christ must be discerning.

Attentive parents have long been aware of the dangers of social media to their children, thanks in part to studies that came out a decade ago revealing the risks: online predators, peer pressure, bullying and pornography. But adults may be less conscious of ways in which they are personally being manipulated by social media. Parents have a responsibility to monitor and limit not only their children's access to social media but their own.

Christian parents in particular should remember their high calling as parents, which is above all other vocations in their lives. Martin Luther wrote: "To the position of fatherhood and motherhood God has given special distinction above all positions that are beneath it" (LC I 105). The emerging phenomenon of social media has created a new obstacle to parents living out that vocation, one of intrusion and manipulation.

The intrusion is more subtle than other forms of advertising. The more time someone spends on social media, the more tailored the platforms evolve to match a user's interests and opinions, reinforcing their confirmation biases and stroking their egos, pulling them back more frequently and holding their attention longer.

Social media engineers design highly sophisticated algorithms to track every "like," every emoji, every click, every scroll, every comment to determine what content to feed users - in the appropriately named "news feed." The algorithms even track whether one scrolls past certain content or pauses a moment to look.

The problem accelerated in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic forced many to work from home. Schools too, moved to virtual classrooms, giving children more opportunities to engage in social media platforms, with less awareness of the peril than their parents. The pandemic has been a boon to social media companies and their advertisers.

Recognising the dangers, many Christian parents have chosen to eliminate screens altogether from their households. Others allow but monitor their children's use. But too many adults fail to monitor their own habits, spending an inordinate amount of time on social media, scrolling through posts for hours, feeding the platform more data to make the experience even more addictive.

God's Word instructs us: "*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith*" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

The vocations of marriage and parenting require Christian adults to beware of all threats to their households. That must include awareness of the subtle hazards inherent in social media, and to strictly monitor their children's use. It also means Christians should make an honest assessment of their own online habits. For most, that means curtailing their time in front of the screen for the sake of their families. And all Christians on social media must use it to serve and build up others (Eph. 4:29).

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

MID-WEEK LENTEN SERVICES	Sunday, 14 March 4 Lent	MID-WEEK LENTEN SERVICES
Wednesday, 10 March, 10.30am Lowood.	8.30am OAK LR 8.30am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR	Wednesday, 17 March, 10.30am Marburg.
Thursday, 11 March, 7.30pm Aubigny	9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC	Thursday, 18 March, 7.30pm Oakey
WEDNESDAY/THURSDAY, 10/11 March		
HYMNS: 65 175 51 48 v.3		
Sunday, 14 March		
READINGS: Exodus 20:1-17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; John 2:13-25		
HYMNS: 756 852 271 (148 292) 368		

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tuesday, 9 March, 7.30pm. Men's Fellowship at Oakey. Opening devotion: Darryl.

Saturday, 13 March, 10.00am. CoC/Sem meeting at Marburg.