

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY,

17 October 2021

21st Sunday after Pentecost

HYMNS: 372 377 149 509

INTROIT:

How will a young man keep his behaviour pure? By keeping it according to Your Word.

I have been searching for You with all my heart. Do not let me go astray from Your Commandments!

I have treasured Your Word in my heart, that I may not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your Prescriptions!

With my lips I have proclaimed all the Decisions of Your mouth.

I have been rejoicing in the way of Your Testimonies as much as in all riches. Let me meditate on Your Directions, and let me examine Your Ways!

I shall delight in Your Statutes. I shall not forget Your Word.

Psalm 119:9-16

COLLECT: O God, Your divine wisdom sets in order all things in heaven and on earth. Put away from us all things hurtful and give us those things that are beneficial for us; 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:

Ecclesiastes 5:10-20 Riches are Meaningless

Hebrews 4:1-16 A Sabbath – Rest for the People of God

Mark 10:23-31 The Rich and the Kingdom of God

SERMON: Mark 10:23-31 GOD MUST DO ALL THE WORK

Welcome to all worshipping with us today! Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.
Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaelc@gmail.com.

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

The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel

There are many occasions when what seem like throwaway remarks from Jesus say far more than we realise. One such occasion is heard in our Lord's exchange with the Canaanite woman in the region of Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 15:21-28), where He tells her, "*I have been sent only to the lost sheep of the family of Israel.*"

These words are striking in their context because of the obvious persistence of the Gentile lady leading with Him and the apparent perplexity of the disciples who were privy to the conversation. But it is striking also because it echoes directly what Jesus had already said to the disciples when He had sent them out to preach the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 10:6). Two questions that arise in both instances are "Why did Jesus put this restriction on His mission, as shared with His disciples?" and "What did He mean by *"the lost sheep of the family of Israel"*?" And, flowing from both, "What relevance, if any, does this have for the church through the ages?"

With respect to the limits Jesus had set on His earthly mission, He was clearly not suggesting that they would extend into His ongoing mission through His apostles. He makes this clear in the Good Shepherd discourse in John's Gospel, where He says, "*I also have other sheep, which are not in this fold. I must also lead them, they will listen to My voice, and there will be one flock and one Shepherd,*" (John 10.16). His mission to the Jews would extend – in line with God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12.3) – to His mission to the world. His charge to the apostles, "*...you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the farthest parts of the world*" (Acts 1:8), confirmed this and set the ever-expanding horizons for that mission – not just through them in their lifetime, but also through the enduring apostolic testimony entrusted to the church.

So, in the setting of Matthew, Jesus is indicating that the focus of His earthly mission was primarily to the Jews. In line with God's covenant purpose, unfolded in the interlocking sequence of covenants established throughout the Old Covenant epoch, the gospel of saving grace was, "*to the Jew first...*" (Rom. 1.16). The significance of this is intensified by the fact it is only in Matthew's Gospel – with its primarily Jewish target audience – that the expression "*lost sheep of the family of Israel*" occurs and also that its roots lie in the nature of His people's need described by Jeremiah (Jer. 50.6).

In many ways the bigger question is what Jesus meant by this turn of phrase. It can hardly have meant merely that the Jews were bereft of true spiritual leaders. (Although in one sense this was true in that elsewhere He denounces the Pharisees as "*blind leaders of the blind*" [Matthew 15.14].) Rather, it points to their actual lostness. Even though these people were members of the covenant community outwardly, they had yet to experience what that meant personally. So, again interestingly in Matthew's Gospel, we have the record of His being named 'Jesus' precisely because "*He will save His people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21). For this reason, during His earthly

ministry, Jesus' ministry was directed towards the Jews who were the heirs of the promise. And in the initial phases of His continuation of this ministry as recorded in Acts, the apostles followed this pattern by making the temple and the synagogue their first ports of call as they proclaimed Jesus as the Christ. But did this aspect of the apostolic mission exhaust what Jesus had in mind when He used the language of "lost sheep" within the covenant community? Almost certainly not.

Just as there were those in ancient Israel who enjoyed outward covenant privilege without any personal experience of its inward, saving efficacy, so too in the church through the ages.

There have always been and always will be those in the church who are within the outward orbit of covenant privilege; but who know nothing of its reality in a lifechanging way. The apostle John indicates as much when, speaking of those who had deserted the church, said, "*They went out from us but did not belong to us*" (1 John 2.19). And this sad story has been repeated through the ages in every congregation – even the most orthodox.

This brings us into the wider and enduring relevance of Jesus' words to the church through the ages. Far from being an issue for God's ancient people as His covenant community, it has been an ever-present issue for the church through the centuries. Indeed, in many ways, for those who have yet to trust in Christ for their salvation, there is no better place to try and hide from the call and command of the gospel than in plain sight among God's professing people in the church. Within the visible church there have always been vast numbers of people who have never bowed the knee to its Lord and head.

What does this mean for Christ's ministers in the church? That they too, like their Master, must recognise *there will always be lost sheep within their flock*. Whether it be children of believers – born into the privileges of the covenant, but yet to embrace the One through whom alone they are authenticated – or adults who profess to be Christians, but whose understanding of what that means is their own and not the Bible's. Since this will always be true, a pastor's ministry must always have a gospel edge. He must not simply presume that all who profess faith are truly converted, but will keep Christ front and centre in his preaching. It will also impact his pastoral involvement with his people. Just as Jesus knows His sheep "by name" – a way of saying, "I know you fully" – so His undershepherds will never be content with mere surface acquaintance with people, but will seek to so earn their trust that they allow him to see the real "them."

The "fields" are not just "ripe for harvest" in the pagan world we live in; they are also ripe for harvest in the churches where pastors serve.

COMING SERVICES

24 October 22 Pentecost	31 October Reformation Day	7 November All Saints
9.30am OAK HC (Combined with Aubigny & Greenwood) followed with Bible Study 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am <u>LOWOOD</u> LR (note the change of venue)	9.00am <u>OAK</u> LR 10.00am LOWOOD AELC HC Service followed by a shared lunch	10.00am Praise & Thanksgiving service at Bethlehem Lutheran Church (re-dedication of new church) 41 Buckland Street, Toowoomba
Sunday, 17 October		
READINGS: Ecclesiastes 5:10-20; Hebrews 4:1-16; Mark 10:23-31		
HYMNS: 372 377 149 (84 376) 509		
Sunday, 24 October		
READINGS: Jeremiah 31:7-9; Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52		
HYMNS: 103 400 241 (779 77) 643		

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Choir Practice today at the new church, 41 Buckland Street, Toowoomba. BYO lunch at 12pm, followed by practice at 1pm.

Thursday, 21 October, 10.00am. Bible Study at Lowood.

Saturday, 23 October, 10.00am. CoC/Sem. Committee meeting at Lowood. Please pass on any agenda items to your representatives to bring to the meeting.

Saturday, 30 October, 8.30am. A working bee will be held at **Troys Road** to move the remaining furniture, and to finalise the setting up of the new church. If you can help, please come along.

Sunday, 7 November. At 8.30am a brief service of the Word will be held at Troys Road, thanking the Lord for His service to us during the time we gathered and worshipped there. After this service, we shall head directly to the new church. All are most welcome to attend.

Weekly sermons and bulletins are available at www.aelc.org.au.

Weekly Sunday School lessons are also now available in the Members section.

If there are any late changes to be made to divine services due to covid lockdowns, these will be listed immediately on the website. If you are unsure, please contact pastor.