

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

31 July 2022

The 8th Sunday after Pentecost

HYMNS: 520 388 384 459

INTROIT:

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth!

Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into His presence with joyful singing!

Know that the LORD is God! It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him, and bless His name!

For the LORD is good. His mercy endures for ever, and His faithfulness through all generations. Psalm 100

COLLECT: O Lord, grant us wisdom to recognise the treasures that You have stored up for us in heaven, that we may never despair but always rejoice and be thankful for the riches of Your grace; 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 1:2, 12-14, 2:18-23 What we toil for will be left to others.

Colossians 3:1-11 Keep your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Luke 12:13-21 Guard against every kind of greed.

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.

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-26

² “Absolutely pointless!” is what the speaker at the assembly has said. “Absolutely pointless! Everything is pointless.” ...

¹² I, the spokesman at the assembly, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

¹³ I have also been applying my mind to study and to use wisdom to investigate all that has been done under heaven. It is a burdensome task that God has given to human beings to be troubled about. ¹⁴ I have seen everything that has been done under the sun and, indeed, everything is pointless and an attempt to catch the wind.

^{2:18} I also hate all my labour, in which I have been toiling under the sun, because I must leave it behind to the person who comes after me. ¹⁹ Besides, who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Nevertheless, he will have control over all my labour, in which I have been toiling and for which I have been using my wisdom under the sun. This also is pointless. ²⁰ Therefore, I turned away, to let my heart des-pair over all the labour in which I had been toiling under the sun. ²¹ For, although a person may have laboured with wisdom, knowledge and skill, he must leave his estate to someone who has not toiled for it. This also is pointless and a great evil. ²² For what does a person get through all the toil and longing of his heart, over which he has been anxious under the sun? ²³ For all his life is full of anguish, and his occupation is irritating. Even in the night, his mind is not content. This also is pointless.

²⁴ There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat, drink and let his soul find satisfaction in his labour. I have seen that this also comes from the hand of God. ²⁵ “For who can eat or who can feel pleasure apart from Me?”

²⁶ For God has given wisdom, knowledge and joy to a person whom He regards kindly. However, to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and amassing wealth, that he may give it to the person whom God regards kindly. This also is pointless and an attempt to catch the wind.

Colossians 3:1-11

- ¹ Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ, search for the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God! ² Keep your minds on things above, not on things on the earth! ³ For you have died, and your lives have been hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your Life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.
- ⁵ Therefore, put to death your members, which are on the earth: sexual sin, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed, which is idolatry! ⁶ Because of these things the wrath of God is coming on disobedient people. ⁷ Once you also walked in these ways when you used to live in them. ⁸ However, now you yourselves must put them all off: anger, fury, malice, slander and filthy language from your mouths! ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with its deeds! ¹⁰ You have also put on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him. ¹¹ Here there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised person nor uncircumcised person, no barbarian, Scythian, slave or free person, but Christ is all things and is in all.

Luke 12:13-21

- ¹³ Someone in the crowd asked Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me!”
- ¹⁴ Jesus asked him, “Man, who appointed Me to be a judge or an arbitrator over you?”
- ¹⁵ Then He told them, “Beware and be on your guard against all greed! For a person’s life does not consist in how plentiful his possessions are.”
- ¹⁶ Then Jesus told them a parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What am I to do? For I have no place to store my produce.’
- ¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I shall do: I shall pull down my barns and build bigger ones and shall store my grain and all my other goods in them. ¹⁹ Then I shall say to myself, ‘Soul, you have many good things stored up for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink and enjoy yourself!’”
- ²⁰ “However, God said to him, ‘You fool, this very night your life will be demanded of you. Then who will get the things that you have prepared?’”
- ²¹ Jesus said, “So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

EAT, DRINK, AND ENJOY OURSELVES
Sermon for the 8th Sunday after Pentecost, 2022
Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-26

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our First Reading from before, Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-26: **“Absolutely pointless!” is what the speaker at the assembly has said. “Absolutely pointless! Everything is pointless.” ...**

¹² I, the spokesman at the assembly, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

¹³ I have also been applying my mind to study and to use wisdom to investigate all that has been done under heaven. It is a burdensome task that God has given to human beings to be troubled about. ¹⁴ I have seen everything that has been done under the sun and, indeed, everything is pointless and an attempt to catch the wind.

^{2:18} I also hate all my labour, in which I have been toiling under the sun, because I must leave it behind to the person who comes after me. ¹⁹ Besides, who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Nevertheless, he will have control over all my labour, in which I have been toiling and for which I have been using my wisdom under the sun. This also is pointless. ²⁰ Therefore, I turned away, to let my heart despair over all the labour in which I had been toiling under the sun. ²¹ For, although a person may have laboured with wisdom, knowledge and skill, he must leave his estate to someone who has not toiled for it. This also is pointless and a great evil. ²² For what does a person get through all the toil and longing of his heart, over which he has been anxious under the sun? ²³ For all his life is full of anguish, and his occupation is irritating. Even in the night, his mind is not content. This also is pointless.

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²⁶ For God has given wisdom, knowledge and joy to a person whom He regards kindly. However, to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and amassing wealth, that he may give it to the person whom God regards kindly. This also is pointless and an attempt to catch the wind.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth.
Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Surely each one of us wants to have a good life. Who doesn't want financial security, or good health, or no worries about the future? Who doesn't want a nice place to live, a happy family life, and good friends and neighbours? Indeed, we want our best life now. Who doesn't want to "*Take life easy, eat, drink and enjoy yourself!*" (Luke 12:19).

And, really, *is there anything wrong with that?* After all, doesn't the writer of Ecclesiastes, most likely King Solomon, say just as much when he says, "**There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat, drink and let his soul find satisfaction in his labour.**" There you have it: "*Take life easy, eat, drink and enjoy yourself!*"

In fact, not only Ecclesiastes but all our readings from today deal with this idea in one way or another. So, what is the good life? Can we have our best life now? Is there wisdom to guide us as we live our lives in this world - our lives "**under the sun,**" as Ecclesiastes puts it? Yes, there is.

The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us that he has seen it all. He's done it all. He's had it all, all the wealth and prosperity and good times you can imagine, and now he takes the time to reflect on all that, and what we hear are words that show he is a little jaded, a little cynical, to say the least. He says, "**Absolutely pointless! Everything is pointless.**" That means that it all is a bunch of nothing, emptiness in the end. He's been busy with many things during his career. He has accomplished a lot, but in the end, he says it doesn't amount to anything. "**I have seen everything that has been done under the sun and, indeed, everything is pointless and an attempt to catch the wind.**"

Have you ever tried to strive after the wind? Were you able to catch it in your hand and take hold of it? No. The wind just keeps on blowing and slips right on out through our fingers. That's what it's like when anyone tries to hold on to his wealth and possessions - they'll just slip on out through your fingers. Why? Because in the end, death will come calling. Death will intervene and put an end to any striving after wealth and trying to hold on to it. No one can take it with them. The pharaohs tried to do that, to take their wealth and their glory with them, that's why they were buried in big pyramids with all their possessions, but it was to no avail. They were just attempting to catch the wind.

“Therefore, I turned away, to let my heart despair over all the labour in which I had been toiling under the sun,” our writer laments. **“For what does a person get through all the toil and longing of his heart, over which he has been anxious under the sun? ²³ For all his life is full of anguish, and his occupation is irritating. Even in the night, his mind is not content. This also is pointless.”**

Well, there it is. According to the Word of God, even if you get to have your best life now, it's all going to come crashing down in the end, and then where are you?

That's a good question, and it's one that the rich fool did not consider. In His parable, Jesus tells how this man was having his best life now, but where did that get him? This rich man was doing very well by the world's standards. His only concern was that he needed more room to store all his possessions. He thought to himself, *“This is what I shall do: I shall pull down my barns and build bigger ones and shall store my grain and all my other goods in them. ¹⁹ Then I shall say to myself, “Soul, you have many good things stored up for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink and enjoy yourself!”* (Luke 12:18-19). Imagine you're this man. You are set for life! All your troubles are gone. You have nothing to worry about. You can enjoy your life today and spend tomorrow, in fact, the rest of your life, taking it easy.

But here's the problem. For this man, there is no tomorrow. God says, *“You fool, this very night your life will be demanded of you.”* In other words,

tonight, he is going to die and will have to give an account for his soul. Death comes knocking, God comes calling, and now *where will he be?* In the case of this rich man, he's not in a good place. He had laid up treasure for himself, but he was not rich in God's sight, and in the end, that is *devastating*.

Now, realise that it is not wealth in itself that is bad. It's not wrong, per se, to enjoy life in the here and now. It's wrong when that all gets out of perspective, when we lose sight of our life in relation to God - that is the problem. Our lives *do not consist* in how plentiful our possessions are. If our best life is what we have now, then we are in a sorry state, no matter how rich and happy we may be. We need a better life than that.

Where do we find this better life? Where? In Christ. In Christ alone. Earlier today, in our Second Reading from Colossians, we heard Paul say, "*Keep your minds on things above, not on things on the earth!*"³ *For you have died, and your lives have been hidden with Christ in God.*"⁴ *When Christ, who is your Life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory*" (3:2-4).

Christ is our life, our true life, the only life that lasts. If we don't have Christ, then we are already dead. We are sunk, lost, and have no hope and no future. Our sins will drag us down to the grave, and then where shall we be? What good will all our possessions be? Our souls will be required of us, and none of us has the right possessions required to pass the test. A life apart from God, a life apart from Christ, will not last. We shall come up empty. **"Absolutely pointless! Everything is pointless."** All one's possessions, all our supposed good life, will not do us for eternity.

But with Christ, in Christ, everything's coming up roses, no matter how poor or how wealthy one may be. "*Your lives have been hidden with Christ in God,*" Paul says. By the world's standards, it may not look like much of a life - our true riches are hidden from the world's eyes. But they are very real and beyond surpassing in Christ because Christ, the Son of God, has come down from the glories of heaven and become poor for our sakes. He has emptied Himself of outward glory, laid aside earthly wealth, and walked the way of the cross for us. He has come to purchase our salvation, which was bought with His precious holy blood as the price. When Jesus did that, He gave us the biggest treasure we could have, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

Now the grave has no more power over us. Now we have what it takes to pass the test on that night when our souls are required of us. We have the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Saviour.

Our lives have been joined to Christ in baptism. We have been raised with Christ, even as He has been raised from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. We have a new life now, and our best life is still to come - on that day when Christ comes again, and we shall be free of sin and toil and all striving after the wind. *“When Christ, who is your Life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory”* (Colossians 3:4).

Surely this changes our perspective on things. It frees us up. We have a joy that cannot be taken from us, no matter our circumstances. We know where our true life is found, and it isn't in our possessions.

When we have things in the proper perspective, then we can go ahead and enjoy the blessings of this life. And that's what Ecclesiastes ultimately is telling us: **“There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat, drink and let his soul find satisfaction in his labour. I have seen that this also comes from the hand of God.”** ²⁵ **“For who can eat or who can feel pleasure apart from Me?”** It's the **“apart from Me (God)”** living of life that is the problem. That's what the rich man in Jesus' parable was doing, living life apart from God. But with God, through faith in Christ - now we can receive and enjoy the blessings of this life as coming from the hand of God. And therein is the wisdom for this day.

So, should we eat, drink, and enjoy ourselves? Yes, by all means! Including and especially in the means of grace. We are invited to regularly eat and drink here at the altar. There, Christ's very body is given for us. There, we drink His holy blood, shed for us for the forgiveness of sins. Eat, drink, and enjoy ourselves! Rejoice in the life Christ here gives to us, free of charge. For Christ is the good life, the best life, both now and forever. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Most holy and eternal God, You rule over all, and have given us victory over all our enemies. We come before You with humble hearts to praise You.

We thank You that You so richly supply the world with daily bread, that You fill the earth with untold resources, that You give every seed the miracle of growth, and send the rain to make fruitful the efforts of those who farm the soil. But, above all else, we thank You for that great love that has satisfied the hunger of our souls by sending from heaven the bread of life, Jesus Christ Your Son. Grant that we may believe in Him with all our hearts, and find joy and satisfaction in Him alone. Help us each day to turn to Him who was wounded because of our sins, and bruised because of our iniquities, so that by His punishment we may be cleansed, healed, and forgiven, and may know in Him the joy of unbroken fellowship with You.

Gracious God, You know that we are weak and sinful. Give us the strength that we do not have of ourselves. Fill us with faith, hope, and love, so that we may live as Your children and enjoy life in all its fullness. Give us the power to stand firm in the spiritual battles of this life, the resolve to be Your true and loyal servants, and the ability to conquer our sins and to live in righteousness.

Bless Your Church, O God. Supply it with pastors who pray without ceasing, proclaim Your Word with boldness, call people to repentance and faith, and prepare them for the final coming of Jesus our Saviour and judge. Give all of us opportunities to speak the Gospel to others, and grant that we may do it with certainty and conviction, with a sense of urgency, and with genuine love for people's bodily and spiritual welfare.

We thank You for the many mercies You have shown to our country. Strengthen all forces of righteousness in our midst, and overthrow all the powers of evil. Teach us to trust in You, for You alone help and protect us.

Bless our homes with Your continual presence and help. Put Your Word in the hearts of children, and Your love in the lives of parents, so that they may all enjoy the bread of life for ever.

Deal mercifully with those among us who are suffering, bereaved, lonely, and depressed. Free them from their troubles, and bind them to You, that they may know the security of Your presence, and live to serve and praise You.

All these things we ask in the precious name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Article: Christians pray in accord with the will of God

God wills that we give Him thanks in our prayers. When we stop and count all the blessings God has given us in our lives, both temporal and spiritual, we have much for which to give thanks. Paul wrote, *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God”* (Phil. 4:6). When only one leper out of ten came back to thank Jesus for healing, Jesus said, *“Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”* (Luke 17:17). When we remember to thank God for His blessings in our prayers, we also shall see that God has richly blessed us. It will enable us to keep the problems God permits to come into our lives in proper perspective.

God wills that we include all people in our prayers. Paul wrote, *“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness”* (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Jeremiah urged the exiles in Babylon to pray for the peace and prosperity of the place where they had been taken captive (Jer. 29:7). We shall pray even for our enemies. Jesus tells us to do this (Matt. 5:44). Jesus did this for His enemies as He suffered on the cross (Luke 23:34).

Stephen prayed for those who stoned him (Acts 7:60). We receive the strength to do this from God's love for us (1 John 4:19).

God also tells us to pray in accord with His will. John wrote, *“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us”* (1 John 5:14).

We may pray for spiritual blessings unconditionally, for we know what God's will is with regard to our spiritual lives. Paul wrote, *“It is God's will that you should be sanctified”* (1 Thess. 4:3). God wants us to grow in faith, love, and sanctified living. Thus we do not have to ask for these things conditionally, saying *“not my will but Your will be done.”*

God wills that we pray conditionally for earthly blessings. In this way we, in faith, place the governance of our lives into His hands. With regard to earthly blessings, we do not know what God's will is. We do not know if His will is that we be rich or poor, sick or healthy, and so on. We leave these matters up to God. We bring our requests to God with the confidence that God will do what is best for us. We know He loves us, for He has given His Son to die for us. Thus we have the assurance He will do what is best for us (Romans 8:32). If an earthly father can give his children good gifts, certainly our heavenly Father will give us what is best for us (Luke 11:9-13). Thus, when we ask God for earthly blessings, we place ourselves by faith into the hands of our loving heavenly Father. Jesus did this as He prayed for His Father to spare Him the cross, if that was

possible (Luke 22:42). The leper did this as he asked Jesus to heal him, if it was His will (Matt. 8:2).

God wills that we pray with the confidence that He will hear and answer our prayers. God does not want us to pray with doubt that He will help. James wrote, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does”* (1:5-8). When people approach God with the attitude “I really don’t think this will help but I am ready to try anything once,” they should not expect God to answer their prayers.

There are those who have said that prayer is like a blank cheque. Just fill in the amount you want God to give you. It is true, no request we can make is too great for our God. Yet we are told to pray conditionally for earthly blessings. Thus we leave earthly matters up to God’s will. Further, Paul tells us that God the Holy Spirit distributes His gifts as He wills. So the claim that the Holy Spirit must give us the gifts of speaking in tongues and healing if we ask Him for them does not agree with Scripture.

Further, those who say that God must heal us if we believe strongly enough do not teach what Scripture teaches. Faith healers do not acknowledge that it may not be God’s will to heal someone. We are directed to ask for earthly blessings in accord with God’s will. Three times the apostle Paul asked God to heal him. Three times the Lord told Paul that it was not His will to heal him. Rather, God gave Paul the strength to bear the problem he had (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

Finally, we shall not pray for the dead. Scripture tells us that people are judged at death (Heb. 9:27). Those who die as believers go to heaven. They do not need our prayers, as they rest in glory. Those who die as unbelievers go to hell. Our prayers cannot help them.

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.

COMING SERVICES

**PLEASE ALWAYS CHECK YOUR BULLETINS FOR ANY LATE CHANGES –
THEY CAN HAPPEN!!!**

7 August 9 Pentecost	14 August 10 Pentecost	21 August 11 Pentecost
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC & Bible Study	9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am O/A/G HC combined at Greenwood followed by Bible Study 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC & Bible Study 9.30am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG LR
Sunday, 7 August		
READINGS: Genesis 15:1-6;	Hebrews 11:1-16;	Luke 12:22-40
HYMNS: 305 200 14 (80 292) 620		
Sunday, 14 August		
READINGS: Jeremiah 23:16-29;	Hebrews 11:17-40; 12:1-3;	Luke 12:49-56
HYMNS: 502 197 376 (840 291) 177		

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wednesday, 3 August, 10.00am. Women's Guild at Toowoomba. Opening devotion: Leanne. Choose a Bible verse from Exodus 21-24. Item of interest: A vase.

Tuesday, 9 August, 7.30pm. Men's Fellowship at Oakey. Opening devotion: John.

Pastor is preparing to start the next confirmation class, beginning early August. If any parents have children of confirmation age, please contact him so he can get the class organised.

Pastor would like for readers in our bookclub to begin meeting. For those reading, can you please see me with suitable days and times that would suit, so we can set a time and place?

BIBLE STUDIES for AUGUST:

Marburg/Lowood. Sunday the 7th at Marburg; Thursday the 25th at Lowood.

Aub/Oak/Grn. Sunday the 14th.

Toowoomba. Sunday the 21st.

FUTURE AELC SERVICE DATES:

September 4 at Greenwood.

October 30 at Toowoomba.