

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

15 March 2023

Bulletin for the 4<sup>th</sup> mid-week Lenten Service

**HYMNS:** 53 754 26 48 v.3

**PSALM:** O LORD, listen to my prayer! Open Your ears to my pleas for favour!  
Answer me in Your faithfulness and in Your righteousness!

Do not bring Your servant into judgment! For in Your sight there is no one alive who is righteous.

For the enemy has been pursuing my life. He has crushed my life to the ground. He has been making me live in dark places, like those who have died long ago.

Therefore my spirit inside me has become faint. My heart inside me has been overcome with numbness.

I remember the days of long ago. I have been meditating on all that You have done. I am meditating on what Your hands have done.

I have been spreading out my hands to You. My soul is thirsting for You like a parched land.

Answer me quickly, O LORD! My spirit has been wasting away. Do not hide Your face from me, or I shall be like those who are going down into the pit!

Cause me to hear about Your mercy in the morning! For I trust in You. Cause me to know the way on which I should go! For I have been lifting up my soul to You.

Rescue me from my enemies, O LORD! I have come to You to conceal myself away.

Teach me to do what You desire! For You are my God. May Your good Spirit lead me on level ground!

For Your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life! In Your righteousness, bring my soul out of trouble!

In Your mercy You will silence my enemies, and destroy all who are hostile toward me! For I am Your servant.

Psalm 143

**COLLECT:** Lord Jesus, You bring light to those who dwell in darkness and make Your love known to them. Do not enter into judgment with Your servants, but strengthen us in the saving faith and guide us into the land of perfect peace where with the Father and the Holy Spirit You live and reign, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**SERMON:** Matthew 23:1-12 Jesus has significant teaching for His followers – both what not to do and who has done for us.

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**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** Isaiah 52:7-10

<sup>7</sup> How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings the good news, who announces peace, who tells the good news of good things, who proclaims salvation and who tells Zion, “Your God is King!” <sup>8</sup> Listen! Your watchmen have raised their voices and are shouting together joyfully. For eye to eye they will see it when the LORD returns to Zion. <sup>9</sup> Be happy and shout joyfully together, ruins of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people. He has redeemed Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup> The LORD has made bare His holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

*Drawn from the Four Gospels, Part 4*

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So they took Jesus from Caiaphas to the governor’s quarters. It was early in the morning. The Jews themselves did not go into the governor’s quarters, to avoid becoming unclean, and to enable them to eat the Passover. So Pilate came outside to them, and asked, “What accusation are you bringing against this Man?”

They answered him, “If He were not a criminal, we would not have handed Him over to you.”

Pilate therefore told them, “You take Him, and judge Him according to your Law!”

The Jews answered him, “We are not permitted to execute anyone.”

This happened that the statement that Jesus had made might be fulfilled, when He indicated the kind of death He was going to die.<sup>1</sup>

They began to accuse Him: “We found that He makes our people disloyal, keeping them from paying taxes to Caesar, and saying that He is Christ, a King.”<sup>2</sup>

Then Pilate went into the governor’s quarters again and called for Jesus. He asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

Jesus answered, “Are you saying this of yourself, or have others told you about Me?”

Pilate answered, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own people and the chief priests have handed You over to me. What have You done?”

Jesus answered, “My kingdom does not belong to this world. If My kingdom belonged to this world, My attendants would fight, to prevent Me from being handed over to the Jews. However, now My kingdom is not from here.”

Therefore Pilate asked Him, “Then are You a king?”

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<sup>1</sup> John 18:28-32

<sup>2</sup> Luke 23:2

Jesus answered, “You are correct in saying that I am a king. I have been born for this reason, and I have come into the world for this reason, that I may testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice.”

Pilate asked Him, “What is truth?”

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again, and told them, “I do not find any ground for complaint in Him.”<sup>3</sup>

While the chief priests and elders were accusing Him, He did not answer at all. Then Pilate asked Him, “Do You not hear how much testimony they are bringing against You?”

However, Jesus made no reply to him, even about a single statement, so that the governor was very amazed.<sup>4</sup>

Pilate told the chief priests and the crowd, “I do not find this Man guilty at all.” However, they kept insisting, “He stirs up the people by teaching all over Judea. He began in Galilee and has come here.” When Pilate heard that, he asked if the Man was a Galilean. When he found out that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, because for a long time he had wanted to see Him. For he had been hearing about Him, and was hoping to see some miracle done by Him. Herod asked Him many questions, but Jesus did not answer him at all. The chief priests and the scribes were standing there and accusing Him vehemently. Herod and his soldiers treated Jesus with contempt and mocked Him. They put a splendid garment on Him and sent Him back to Pilate. On that very day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other. For before this they had been enemies of each other.

Then Pilate called the chief priests, the rulers, and the people together. He told them, “You have brought this Man to me as one who is inciting the people to rebellion. Now, look! I have examined this Man before you and found Him innocent of the charges that you are making against Him. No, neither has Herod. For he has sent Him back to us; and, as you can see, He has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I shall chastise Him and release Him.”<sup>5</sup>

At every feast the governor used to release to the crowd one prisoner whom they chose. At that time they were holding a well-known prisoner called Barabbas. He had been in prison with the rebels who had committed a murder in the rebellion. Pilate knew that the chief priests had handed Jesus over because they were jealous. <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John 18:33-38

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 27:12-14

<sup>5</sup> Luke 23:4-16

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 27:15-16; Mark 15:6-10

Pilate asked them, “Which do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called ‘Christ’?”<sup>7</sup>

The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus put to death.<sup>8</sup>

The governor asked them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?”<sup>9</sup>

The whole crowd then began to shout aloud: “Away with this Man! Release Barabbas for us!”<sup>10</sup>

While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent someone to tell him, “Do not have anything to do with that innocent Man! For I have suffered greatly today in a dream because of Him.”<sup>11</sup>

Pilate spoke to them again, because he wanted to release Jesus.<sup>12</sup> He again asked them, “Therefore, what am I to do with the One whom you call ‘the King of the Jews’?”

They shouted back, “Crucify Him!”

Pilate asked them, “Why? What wrong has He done? I have found nothing in Him to make Him deserve to die. I shall therefore chastise Him and release Him.”<sup>13</sup>

M: Here ends the reading.

## **Jesus has Significant Teaching for His Followers - Both What Not to Do and Who has Done What Had to be Done for Us – Tuesday of Holy Week**

Grace and peace to you all from our risen Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The text for our sermon tonight is Matthew 23:1-12: **Then Jesus told the crowds and His disciples: <sup>2</sup> “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, do all the things that they tell you and keep them; but do not do as they do! For they tell others but do not practise it. <sup>4</sup> They tie up loads that are heavy and hard to carry and lay them on other people’s shoulders but they themselves are not willing to move them with one of their fingers. <sup>5</sup> They do everything that they do that other people may see them. For they make their prayer-strips broad and the tassels on their garments long. <sup>6</sup> They love the places of honour at dinners and the most important seats in synagogues. <sup>7</sup>**

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew 27:17

<sup>8</sup> Mark 15:11

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 27:21

<sup>10</sup> Luke 23:18

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 27:19

<sup>12</sup> Luke 23:20

<sup>13</sup> Mark 15:12-14; Luke 23:22

**They love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by other people.<sup>8</sup> However, you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’! For you have only one Teacher, and you are all brothers.<sup>9</sup> Do not call anyone on earth ‘Father’! For you have only one Father, He who is in heaven.<sup>10</sup> Do not be called ‘teachers’! For you have only one Teacher, the Christ.<sup>11</sup> He who is the greatest among you shall be your servant!<sup>12</sup> He who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.**

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

Dear friends in Christ,

You and I can learn a lot by listening to various teachers. In school, we can be blessed by listening and learning from teachers. In the workplace, we can learn a lot by listening to those who’ve worked in our field for many years and accumulated much knowledge and wisdom that can benefit us and our work.

You and I can also learn a lot by watching others. Some of what we learn by watching others can be good and beneficial, and some can be negative and harmful. In such cases, we should learn *not* to act that way instead.

For example, we can learn valuable lessons in humility by watching how a humble person responds to praise and accolades when they come his or her way. Such a person may deflect them or make sure that they direct praise to others who helped them. We can observe how they always consider *the needs of others* to be more important than their own.

On the other hand, we can learn how not to conduct ourselves when we observe the actions of an arrogant, conceited person. We see how he or she is always self-promoting and considers others and their needs *less important* than their own. We see how they walk around with a sense of smug superiority.

In our Scripture lesson tonight, Jesus, always the Teacher, refers to both types of learning when He speaks to the crowds and His disciples. Jesus has significant teaching for His followers - what not to do and what had to be done for us.

It is Tuesday of Holy Week, and Jesus is just three days away from being arrested, tried, convicted, crucified, killed, and buried. Jesus calls attention to **“The scribes and the Pharisees (who) sit in Moses’ seat.”**

Now, we must admit that we do not know anything about this “Moses’ seat” to which Jesus refers. Some speculate that it was a specific piece of furniture in a synagogue. Others speculate that it was not a physical piece of furniture but a

figurative position or way of teaching that aligns with the teachings of Moses. In the end, we don't know, but it appears to be an honoured and authoritative teaching position, to say the least.

Jesus cautions the crowds and His disciples, saying, **“do all the things that they tell you and keep them; but do not do as they do!”** Insofar as the scribes and the Pharisees are reading and transmitting to the people the actual words of Moses, Jesus is fine with the crowds and His disciples following them. But He also makes it clear that the actions of the scribes and the Pharisees do not match their words. They say one thing and do another – that's the definition of a hypocrite.

Jesus mentions some of the arrogant practices of the scribes and Pharisees. **“They do everything that they do that other people may see them,”** He says. It was public recognition and notoriety that they were seeking. They wanted the praise of others for the pious practice of their religion. They wanted to be recognised as an example by all who saw them.

**“They make their prayer-strips broad and the tassels on their garments long.”** The prayer-strips were tied around a person's forehead or arms. The tassels were blue strands attached to the corners of their garments to remind them of the Ten Commandments. These originated in Old Testament commands, and you can still see them being worn today in some strains of Judaism. But again, notice that by making their **“prayer-strips broad”** and the **“tassels on their garments long,”** the point was to draw attention to themselves. They would be seen as superior. It was all self-focused and self-centred.

**“They love the places of honour at dinners and the most important seats in synagogues.”** The scribes and Pharisees loved to be seen and loved the privileges that came with their positions. The best seats were the seats that allowed them to be seen and heard by all. A lowly seat off to the side? That was for others, not them!

**“They love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by other people.”** They loved their public recognition as well. And apparently, in some circles, they were quite popular. After all, they were receiving public recognition and greeting.

**“Do not do as they do,”** Jesus teaches the crowds and His disciples.

The fact that Jesus warns the crowds and His disciples about such pride-filled behaviour should also warn us because it is the very nature of sin and the sinful nature with which we have been conceived and born to focus on ourselves and promote ourselves. And how easily sinful pride can rear its ugly head in our midst:

We do things in or for our church, and nobody says anything in the way of praise. So we decide we're never helping out again. Or worst of all, we begin to think we're a little more worthy of God's blessings than others *because* of all we've done or all we know about the Bible or how often we're in church worshipping and studying the Scriptures. A feeling of spiritual superiority is so easily obtained when we take our eyes off our Saviour and focus them on ourselves.

Jesus goes on to teach His hearers that **“He who is the greatest among you shall be your servant!”**

How ironic when we stop to think about the events in our text from Tuesday in Holy Week. The One speaking these words in our text, the teacher, is the God-man, Jesus Christ. He is the One deserving of glory, honour, and worship, and yet, as Paul writes in Philippians 2, Jesus is the One who *“was in the form of God, yet He did not consider His equality with God as a prize to exploit. Instead, He emptied Himself, (and) took on the form of a slave.”* Ultimately, *“He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”* (Phil. 2:6-7, 8).

That *“death of the cross”* covers all our sin - even our own misguided, undeserved pride and arrogance. The slate has been wiped clean, and no sin and guilt remain. God has removed them *“as far as the east is from the west”* (Psalm 103:12). The One who humbled Himself took care of it all for us and in our place.

And the same Jesus says near the end of our text, **“the greatest among you shall be your servant.”** How true in His case. He is the greatest ever to be among us, and how He served all of us through His life, death, and resurrection!

We can learn a great deal by listening to our Saviour's teaching tonight and watching His example. May God work in us daily to keep our eyes focused on Jesus, not on ourselves, and serve God and our neighbour in all humility. As Jesus said, **“he who humbles himself will be exalted.”** Amen.

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