

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

2 July – Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

HYMNS: 518 361 372 157 289 380

INTROIT: Psalm 119:153-160

Look at my affliction and rescue me! For I have not forgotten Your Instruction.

Defend my case and redeem me! Preserve my life according to Your Promise!

Salvation is far from wicked people. For they have not been intent on Your Prescriptions.

Your acts of compassion are many, O LORD. Preserve my life according to Your Decisions!

My persecutors and my adversaries are many, but I have not turned away from Your Testimonies.

I have seen those who act faithlessly and have been loathing them. For they have not been keeping Your Word.

See how I love Your Directions! O LORD, preserve my life according to Your mercy!

The summary of Your Word is Truth. Every one of Your righteous Decisions endures for ever.

COLLECT: Almighty God, by the working of Your Holy Spirit, grant that we may gladly hear Your Word proclaimed among us and follow its directing; 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: Jeremiah 28:5-9 True and false prophets.

Romans 7:1-13 "You also have died to the law through the body of Christ."

Matthew 10:34-42 "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

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.

Jeremiah 28:5-9

⁵ Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the Temple of the LORD.

⁶ The prophet Jeremiah said: “Amen! May the LORD do this! May the LORD make your words, which you have prophesied, come true and restore the articles of the Temple of the LORD and all the exiles from Babylon to this place!

⁷ Nevertheless, please listen to this Message, which I am speaking directly to you and to all the people! ⁸ ‘From ancient times the prophets who preceded you and me prophesied war, calamity and the plague against many countries and great kingdoms. ⁹ The prophet who prophesies peace is recognised as the prophet whom the LORD has sent when the Message of the prophet comes true.”

Romans 7:1-13

¹ Or do you not know, fellow-Christians (for I am speaking to people who know the Law) that the Law controls a person only while he is still alive? ² For the woman who has a husband has been bound by the Law to her husband while he is alive. However, if her husband dies, she has been released from the Law that binds her to her husband. ³ Therefore, while her husband is alive, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man. However, if her husband dies, she is free from the Law, with the result that she is not an adulteress if she marries another man. ⁴ Therefore, fellow-Christians, you too have been put to death in relation to the Law through the body of Christ, with the result that you have begun to belong to Another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, that we may bear fruit to God. ⁵ For, while we were in the sinful human nature, the sinful passions that were aroused by the Law were at work in our members, that we produced fruit for death. ⁶ However, now we have been released from the Law, because we have died to what we were being bound by, with the result that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

⁷ What shall we say, then? Is the Law sin? Certainly not! Rather, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law. For I would not have known covetousness if the Law had not said, “**You shall not covet!**” ⁸ However, sin took an opportunity through the Commandment and produced in me every kind of covetousness. For sin is dead without the Law. ⁹ Once I used to be alive without the Law; but, when the Commandment came, sin became alive, and I died. ¹⁰ The very Commandment that was intended to lead to life was found in

my case to lead to death. ¹¹ For sin took an opportunity through the Commandment, deceived me and through the Commandment killed me. ¹² Therefore, the Law is holy, and the Commandment is holy, righteous and good. ¹³ So, did this good thing cause death for me? Certainly not! Rather, that sin might be recognised as sin, it was producing death for me through what is good, that sin might become extremely sinful through the Commandment.

Matthew 10:34-42

³⁴ “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth! I have not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn **a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.** ³⁶ **A person’s enemies will be those in his own home.**

³⁷ “Anyone who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and anyone who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ The person who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ The one who has found his life will lose it, but the one who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

⁴⁰ “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who has sent Me. ⁴¹ He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward. He who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward. ⁴² Whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I tell you, will certainly not lose his reward.”

A SWORD, A CROSS, AND A LIFE

Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost 2023

Matthew 10:34-42

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 Gospel from before, Matthew 10:34-42: “**Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth! I have not come to bring peace but a sword.** ³⁵ **For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.** ³⁶ **A person’s enemies will be those in his own home.**

³⁷ **“Anyone who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and anyone who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ The person who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ The one who has found his life will lose it, but the one who has lost his life for My sake will find it.**

⁴⁰ **“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who has sent Me. ⁴¹ He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward. He who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward. ⁴² Whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I tell you, will certainly not lose his reward.”**

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Jesus had been instructing His disciples on several issues as He sent them out among the Jewish people living in Galilee. While they were to preach the Good News, only some things they taught would be welcomed. They could expect persecution as they carried out their mission of being His witness. From our text today, Jesus speaks words that cut to the heart. Followers of Jesus will have challenging lives. And that still applies today. If any wish to follow Jesus as His disciple, there will be conflict and suffering because you are Christ’s follower.

Jesus begins by saying: **“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth! I have not come to bring peace but a sword.”** Now this sounds strange because didn’t Jesus come to bring peace? Didn’t the angels sing *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people whom He favours.”* at His birth? (Luke 2:14). Yes, they did. And didn’t Isaiah prophesy that the Messiah would be called the Prince of Peace?¹ Yes, he did. So why does Jesus say He has **“not come to bring peace.”** Which is it, *peace or conflict?*

The answer depends on what kind of peace you’re talking about. If you’re talking about an earthly peace, where everything is peaches and cream,

¹ Isaiah 9:6

where life is living the dream, where all is well, and everyone likes you, then no, Jesus did not come to bring that kind of peace. Speaking to His disciples a little later, Jesus will say to them, "*Peace I am leaving with you. A peace that is My own I am giving to you. I am not giving it to you as the world gives it*" (John 14:27). And again: "*I have spoken these things to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have distress. Nevertheless, have courage! I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33).

So, peace in Jesus, but tribulation and trouble in the world. Jesus predicts and guarantees it. In this world, in this life, we shall have trouble. We shall experience a sword if we're going to be followers of Christ.

What is this "sword" that Jesus speaks of? What does it signify? It signifies conflict, strife, and division. And this sword will even cut through families. Jesus says: "**For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.**"³⁶ **A person's enemies will be those in his own home.**"

Now this is not how it has to be. Thank God for families that stay together, pray, go to church, and follow Christ together. May their number increase! But sadly, that is not the case in every family. In many families, some follow Christ in faith, and others do not, which can create strife and division within the family, and these cuts can leave deep wounds.

Whether division in a family is severe or tolerable, a family divided, a house divided, is not a pleasant thing. Maybe you've experienced that in your own family. It can be heartbreaking to see adult children who were raised in the church but who have abandoned the faith, left the church, and taken on the ways of the world. And then there is the wife whose husband refuses to go to church with her and hear the Word of God. And vice versa. It's a source of pain that becomes a dull ache over time, but it's still there. And so it goes. As the prophet Isaiah once asked, "*Who has believed our Message?*" (53:1). Why do people not do the only sensible thing and come to Christ and His church and here receive God's gift of salvation? Why will they resent and dislike you because you do? It's because you are a living, breathing demonstration of someone who knows they're a sinner and in need of a Saviour, and many people don't want to hear that. They think they're good enough on their own. And you're a reminder that they aren't. So, *they resent you* and don't like to hear that their favoured may be what God considers sin.

So if you identify with Christ and the Bible and the church, they will take it out on you. Well, don't be surprised, Jesus is saying today because it comes with the territory.

This is the sword that Jesus is speaking about, the sword of division, conflict, and strife that comes with being a Christian. And how we see that in our world today! Even in our own country, in our backyard, there is strong opposition and increasing hostility toward the Christian faith. Not only has Australia become a post-Christian society, but it is also even becoming an anti-Christian society. We touched on all this in last week's sermon. All those things God detests, abortion, homosexuality, and so on, are seen as nothing unusual or wrong. You have the right to do as you wish. If you think it's right, then go for it!

Sadly, no one cares what God has to say. The final sentence in the Book of Judges says, "*Everyone did what he thought was right*" (21:25). When these words were written, the Israelites had become so preoccupied with daily life that they cast the Lord aside. Too many forgot that the Lord had ruled Israel under the covenant made at Mount Sinai. So it is even today that when people forget the gracious commandments of their King and make up their own rules as they go along, they are rules that bring *tragedy to families and the nation as a whole*. This is the world we live in today, and it may get a whole lot worse before it gets better.

As children of God, we have a cross to take up. Jesus speaks of this also: "**The person who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me.**" A cross is an instrument of death. It is designed to cause extreme suffering and then death. And that's what Jesus says we are to take up. That's pretty tough!

The cross is the suffering we go through because we are Christians. There is a putting-to-death that happens in a Christian's life. Yes, it is the suffering the world lays upon us because we are Christians. That is certainly at the forefront of what Jesus is speaking about here. In that respect, it's much like the sword we've already discussed.

But there's another aspect of the cross we bear as Christians, and that is the putting to death of our own self - our own sinful nature, our Old Adam, as it's called. He needs to be put under the water and drowned on a daily basis.

It's putting to death the sinful flesh that keeps on wanting to retake control of our life. In baptism, we were buried and raised with Christ, but that dying and rising needs to continue happening daily. *"The Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever,"* Luther writes in his Small Catechism. That, my friends, is the nature of the baptised life.

A sword, a cross, and a life. So we lose our old lives, but we gain a new one. Jesus also speaks of this: **"The one who has found his life will lose it, but the one who has lost his life for My sake will find it."** If all you're looking for is the best life you can have now, a nice comfortable life with no troubles, then ironically, you'll lose your life. You will not know the new eternal life that Jesus has to give you. But when you lose your life and give up on yourself and your own supposed righteousness, you will find your true life. Your true life is found only in connection with Christ.

Jesus has come to give us life – life in abundance! He has done this by living the life you and I do not live as we ought. Jesus walked the walk and talked the talk - the way life was meant to be lived by us human beings. This is righteousness, and Jesus has it. He lived it, yet even though He deserved only praise and honour, this same Jesus suffered and died in shame and disgrace – all for us. Talk about taking up one's cross! Jesus did it, literally! He was lifted on His cross to do what only He could do. The sinless Son of God suffered and died for all of sinful humanity. He shed His holy blood to cleanse us of our sins. We are forgiven in Christ through faith in Him.

So now Jesus has a life to give us. It is His life, the life that is victorious over sin and death. He is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity, and because we are joined to him in Holy Baptism, so shall we. Jesus has broken the hold that death would have over us. He will raise us bodily to live with Him forever. And He has already raised us to a new life in Him. This is a life of love, service, and joy in the Christian faith. In the church. In our homes. In our daily lives. Even in the midst of sword and cross, we have this life that Christ gives, and no one can take it away from us. What good news Jesus has for us here today! Amen.

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

PRAYER FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Almighty God, eternal Lord and Creator of all things, You are our light and our salvation; You are all we ever need. We, Your children, come before You in prayer, and ask You to place Your hands on us in blessing.

Bless us with sincere faith in Your Son Jesus Christ. Grant that we may believe in Him with all our hearts, trust in Him alone for salvation, and have the assurance of everlasting life through Him. Renew us through our baptism day by day, as we live in hope and wait for our complete salvation in the new creation.

Keep us in Your fatherly care in this world, which has been ruined by sin. Guard us in all times of danger, and protect us in every peril. Keep us safe, by Your grace, that we may never lose our faith because of our sins and frailty. Grant that we may keep growing in faith and spiritual understanding. When death approaches, make us strong by Your sure promises, and finally give us the joy of Your eternal presence, complete redemption of our bodies, and resurrection to life eternal.

Fill Your Church with Your grace and power, O Lord, so that the light of Your truth may shine throughout the world. May all people know Your will and rejoice in Your salvation. Equip our pastors to be Christlike in mercy and love, and true leaders of Your people. Give us true joy as we serve You and one another, living in newness of life.

Hold Your hand of blessing over our land. Preserve us from war, earthquake, destructive storms, famine, disease, violence, tyranny, persecution, treachery, and rebellion. Guide those in government, business, education, and entertainment, so that they may live in the knowledge that You are Lord, and no other god may share Your glory.

Be gracious to all our homes and families. Enable children to grow in body, mind, and spirit, enjoying favour with God and man. By Your Spirit equip all parents with Christian faith and insight, and the constant desire to obey Your will.

Be merciful on all who suffer sickness, sorrow, the weakness of age, the weariness of hard work, separation from loved ones, uncertainty about the future, broken relationships, or any other burden. Give them Your rich peace.

Show Yourself to be a God always ready to help, and give faith, trust, courage, and hope to all in need.

We pray for these things to You, heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, is the one God, to be praised for ever and ever. Amen.

Article: God's Book

Many Australian homes have a Bible. Sometimes it is on the coffee table. Sometimes it is on the shelf. Sometimes people do not know where their Bible is. As a pastor visiting in a home, I would rather see a well-worn Bible than a well-kept Bible. The Bible is to be read regularly, not just dusted occasionally.

Do you read your Bible? Do you know what it is? If you know what it is and whose book it is, you have a real reason to read it. Not reading it is leaving a treasure unopened and unused.

The Bible is not just another book. It is “the Book.” “Bible” means literally “Book.” The Bible is the Book, the best and greatest Book. It is God's Book.

God inspired the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16). He called men to be prophets (Old Testament) and apostles (New Testament). He taught them what to say and what words to use (1 Corinthians 2:13). That is why the Bible is God's Word, God's Book.

It was men who put pen to paper, but God is the Author of the Bible. He has authored no other book. The Word of God through the prophets and apostles is the foundation on which the faith and life of the Christian is to be built (Ephesians 2:20). It is through the Word of God that people are brought to faith in Christ (Romans 10:17).

The principle is “Scripture alone,” *sola Scriptura*. Only the Bible has authority for Christian faith and life: not reason, not emotion, not tradition, not organisation, not supposed new revelation. History is full of attempts to set up some authority besides the Bible. That always becomes an authority over the Bible. But Christ's disciples are to stay with Christ's Word (John 8:32). The sheep hear the Shepherd's voice (John 10:2-5).

Because God is the Author of the Bible, everything it says is true. True

means not false. Not false means not in error, not erring. That is what Christians mean when they say that the Bible is inerrant. We are simply saying that it is completely and totally true. The Bible is inerrant because its Author is infallible. His Word is truth (John 17:17). That is why Jesus said, “*The Scripture cannot be broken*” (John 10:35).

Everything the Bible says is true. God knows all about history, science, geography, and everything else. He created the world and everything in it. What He says about anything is certainly right and correct. So what His Book says on any topic is certainly right and correct. This is the Christian attitude toward the Bible. This is the attitude of Christ and the apostles in the New Testament toward the Old Testament.

It is important to know that what the Bible says on any topic is true. But our purpose is not merely knowledge. We are not talking about some philosophical opinion. The Bible is a practical book, with practical truth and practical wisdom.

Knowing that the Bible is true is important because it is essential to trust the truth, value, and wisdom of what it teaches. When someone casts doubt on anything the Bible says, he casts doubt on everything the Bible says. What it says is important for the right relationship to God. We can hardly claim a good relationship with a person if we doubt, distrust, and deny his words. We can hardly have a good relationship to God without listening to what He says.

God’s Word of Law constantly shows us our sin. That is not pleasant, but it is necessary. We have to know about the problem to care about the solution. God’s Word of Gospel constantly reassures the one who admits his sin that all his sins are forgiven because Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, died in place of all, for the sins of all. That is the central message of the Bible. That is the central truth and trust of the Christian faith. That is worth regularly hearing in a church where the Word is purely preached. That is worth reading in God’s Book.

The Bible is God’s Book. God means to bless and save us through His Word, by which He brings people to faith in Christ (2 Timothy 3:15). That should move us to read it. The Christian’s flesh is still weak, making reading the Bible seem a chore. But the Christian’s spirit wants to read, learn, and be drawn closer to Jesus in true faith.

Children's Message:

Do any of you know what a babysitter is? They're someone your parents ask to come and watch over you if they have to go out for the evening. Maybe they ask someone close to you, like an auntie or uncle, or your grandparents, or even someone who is a very close family friend. Whomever your baby may be, they are there to make sure you are safe and to care for you. And, surely, you must listen to your babysitter as well when they tell you to do something like "eat your dinner," or "brush your teeth and go to bed!" maybe your babysitter even prays with you before you go to sleep. Your babysitter may not be your mum and dad, but they are there for your parents to do for you what your parents would do.



Do you know who has sent your pastor to you today? Jesus has! Do you know why? Because He loves you and wants your pastor to do for you what He would do - to bring you His blessing and peace. Why didn't He just come here Himself? Well, He is here. He's just hidden from us. He chooses to send His Good News to us sinners through another sinner, and today, that's the pastor! Jesus sends the pastor to tell you about Him and to bring you the forgiveness, blessing, and peace He has won for you on the cross. Jesus has sent someone to

baptise you to make us friends again with God.

Of course, the pastor isn't a babysitter. But God, who loves you, sends Him to tell you what He wants you to know and give you what He wants to give you. The pastor is not Jesus, but he works for Him. Jesus has sent your pastor to care for you, your parents, and everyone here in church.

Jesus gave you a big promise. He said to the men He sent in His name, "*He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who has sent Me*" (Matt. 10:40). That means that when you listen to your pastor tell you what Jesus has done for you, wants for you, and gives to you, you're actually listening to Jesus. When you welcome your pastor, you're welcoming Jesus too, and God the Father. Of course, Jesus also sent your dad and mum to love you, care for you, and bless you in His name. And when you listen to them as they bless you and teach about Jesus, you're listening to Jesus Himself! *Thank you, Lord Jesus, for saving us and having someone baptise us and tell us Your words. Let us always receive faithful pastors and so welcome you. Amen.*

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

9 July 6 Pentecost	16 July 7 Pentecost	23 July 8 Pentecost
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.30am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.30am MARBURG HC	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.30am MARBURG LR
Sunday, 9 July		
READINGS: Zechariah 9 th 9-12; Romans 7:14-25a; Matthew 11:25-30		
HYMNS: 355 854 308 (345 294) 208		
Sunday, 16 July		
READINGS: Isaiah 55:10-13; Romans 8:12-17; Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23		
HYMNS: 507 197 267 (840 847) 515		

Wednesday, 5 July, 10.00am. Women's Guild at Bethlehem Toowoomba. Opening devotion: Vicki. Choose a Bible verse from Leviticus 21-24. Item of interest: A glass (eg. wine or beer).

Saturday, 8 July, 10.00am. CoC/Sem meeting at Bethlehem Toowoomba.

Saturday, 8 July, 1.00pm. Fellowship afternoon at Bethlehem Church Hall.

Tuesday, 11 July, 7.30pm. Men's Fellowship at Oakey. Opening devotion: John.

Marburg/Lowood members note: Service on 23 July is at Marburg – not Lowood. There was a mistake in the yearly schedule.

JULY BIBLE STUDIES:

Thursday, 13 July, 10.00am, Lowood.

Thursday, 20 July, 7.30pm, Greenwood.

Friday, 28 July, 7.30pm, Oak/Aub at Aubigny.

Sunday, 30 July, 8.30am, Toowoomba.