

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKY
25 February Second Sunday in Lent

HYMNS: 62 385 403 848 51 377

INTROIT: Psalm 22:23-31

You who fear the LORD, praise Him; all you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him! Be afraid of Him, all you descendants of Israel!

For He has not despised or detested the misery of the Wretched One; and He has not hidden His face from Him; but when He cried to Him for help, He heard.

My praise comes from You in the great assembly; I shall fulfil My vows in the presence of those who fear Him.

Humble people will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the LORD will praise Him. May your hearts live for ever!

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD; all the families of the nations will worship before You.

For the kingdom belongs to the LORD, and He rules over the nations.

All the prosperous people of the earth have been eating and worshipping; all those who go down to the dust will kneel before Him, even he who has not kept himself alive.

Descendants will serve Him; a coming generation will be told about the Lord. They will come and tell about His righteousness to a people yet to be born. For He has accomplished it!

COLLECT: O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power, defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

Pastor Ziebell can be contacted via phone/text at 0407 583922.

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

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaelc@gmail.com.

Pastor is usually in his office Tuesday-Wednesday for anyone who would like to call in. Other days of the week are set aside for visits.

READINGS:

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 God reaffirms His covenant with Abraham.

Romans 5:1-11 Peace and Joy

Mark 8:27-38 Jesus' sorrow for Jerusalem.

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

¹ When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and told him: "I am God Almighty. Live in My presence and be blameless! ² I shall make My Covenant between Me and you and shall give you very many descendants."

³ Abram fell face-down, and God spoke to him: ⁴ "This is My very own Covenant with you. You will be the father of many nations. ⁵ You will not be called 'Abram' any longer, but your name will be 'Abraham,' because **I have made you a father of many nations.** ⁶ I shall make you extremely fruitful, **I shall make nations of you** and kings will come from you. ⁷ I shall establish My Covenant between Me and **you and your descendants** after you for generations to come. It will be an everlasting Covenant, that **I may be your God** and the God of your descendants after you...

¹⁵ God also told Abraham: "As for your wife Sarai, you shall not call her 'Sarai,' but her name shall be 'Sarah'! ¹⁶ I shall bless her and have also given you a son from her. I shall bless her, and she will become the mother of nations. Kings of peoples will come from her."

Romans 5:1-11

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we also glory in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, ⁴ and perseverance produces character, and character, hope. ⁵ **Hope does not disappoint** us either, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us. ⁶ For, while we were still helpless, at the set time Christ died for ungodly people. ⁷ For very rarely will someone die for a righteous person, although someone might perhaps even dare to die for a good person. ⁸ However, God shows His own love for us by this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more, therefore, now that we have been justified by His blood, we shall be saved through Him from God's wrath. ¹⁰ For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, now that we have been reconciled,

we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Mark 8:27-38

²⁷ Then Jesus went away with His disciples to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way He asked His disciples, “Who do people say I am?”

²⁸ They answered Him, “John the Baptist, but others say Elijah, and others say one of the other prophets.”

²⁹ He asked them, “You, however, who do you say I am?”

Peter answered Him, “You are the Christ!”

³⁰ He strictly warned them not to tell anyone about Him.

³¹ Then Jesus began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer greatly, to be rejected by the elders, Chief Priests and scribes, to be killed and, after three days, to rise again. ³² He was speaking frankly about this, and Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. ³³ However, Jesus turned around, looked at His disciples and rebuked Peter, saying, “Get behind Me, Satan! For you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men.”

³⁴ When He had called the crowd to Him together with His disciples, He told them: “If anyone wants to follow Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me! ³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever will lose his life for My sake and for the sake of the Good News will save it.

³⁶ For what good does it do a person to gain the whole world and yet lose his own soul? ³⁷ For what is a person to give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ For, if anyone is ashamed of Me and of My Words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

JUSTIFIED, SAVED, AND RECONCILED

Sermon for the 2nd Sunday in Lent 2024

Mark 8:27-38

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, Mark 8:27-38

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Mark's recorded words of our text give the first prediction Jesus made of His passion. In the Gospel narrative, the early ministry of Jesus in Galilee leads up to the point of Peter's great confession, "**You are the Christ!**" Then Jesus tells the disciples what His being the Christ will entail, that He, the Christ, must suffer and die. Mark records it as follows: "**Then Jesus began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer greatly, to be rejected by the elders, Chief Priests and scribes, to be killed and, after three days, to rise again.**"

Jesus tells us what will happen to Him - His suffering, rejection, and being killed. What difference does this make in our lives? What is the result, the outcome, of Jesus' suffering? What good will it produce?

First is the passion prediction. "**Jesus began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer greatly.**"

This term, "**the Son of Man,**" is the title that Jesus uses the most often for Himself. It goes back to the Book of Daniel, where a vision of "*Someone like the Son of Man coming among the clouds of heaven... dominion, glory and a kingdom were given to Him, that all peoples, nations and language-groups might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will not be destroyed*" (Daniel 7:13-14).

Now, to be sure, Jesus Christ fulfils this vision of Daniel. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and He will come again with glory among the clouds of heaven on the Last Day. But how does He get there? This "*Son of Man,*" the Messiah, the Christ, comes to His glory *through suffering*. That's what's so odd about how Jesus talks about Himself as the Son of Man to the disciples, and so it throws Peter off. He doesn't want to hear about a suffering Christ. He wants the glory model; no suffering is required. But Jesus tells him, "**You do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men.**"

The things of God mean that the Christ *must suffer many things*. He will be rejected by the very religious leaders who ought to be hailing Him - the elders, chief priests, and scribes. But instead of hailing Him, they will be hauling Him before the Roman governor and demanding that this Man be crucified - and they will get their wish.

So Jesus here predicts His passion. Yet this is more than just some tragedy about an innocent man suffering unjustly. There is a purpose and a goal to all of this. God the Father is doing something by Christ's suffering, accomplishing something that affects every one of us in the greatest way, and the Apostle Paul helps us see this by what he wrote in our Second Reading for today.

Our Second Reading was from Paul's Letter to the Romans, chapter 5, and from this Letter, Paul tells us the outcome and result of Christ's passion and what it produces for us and in us.

Paul piles up the terms for what Jesus' suffering and death produce for us. He uses rich, gospel-filled words, words like "justified," "saved," and "reconciled." These are beautiful, wonderful words of life! Let's look briefly at each of these three terms: "justified," "saved," and "reconciled."

Let's start with "justified."

Paul writes: "*Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" and later, "*we have been justified by His blood*" (5:1, 9). To be "justified" means to be put right with God and declared righteous in God's court of justice. Think of a courtroom, and you are the one on trial. God's Law is brought out to charge you with your offences: Have you kept these commandments to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbour as yourself? The evidence from your life is brought forward: Many acts of selfishness, casting God aside, of failure to help and love all the people you meet: impure thoughts, hateful words, dishonest deeds. And there is no plea-bargaining. The verdict is in: ***Guilty as charged***. The judgment and punishment are decreed in God's Law book: Eternal death and damnation.

Suddenly, your Advocate comes forward. He is Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He has kept all the laws in the book perfectly, the only man who ever has, and *He offers to take your place*. He suffers the penalty for all your sins. He sheds His holy blood - the blood of God's only Son. ***Jesus has done this for you on the cross***. Therefore, God's justice is satisfied. The penalty, the death penalty, has been paid in full. Now God can be a just, righteous judge, even when He declares you, a sinner. He says to you: "Not guilty!" That is what it means to be justified, and that is what Christ's passion has produced for you!

The next term is "saved."

This is another word Paul uses to describe what Christ's passion has produced for you. Think of a situation of great danger. Your boat has sunk in the middle of the ocean. You are drifting along, clinging to some debris that separates you from drowning. You're helpless against the sharks. You have no food or water; you're exposed to the elements. You can't last much longer. Who will rescue you from your desperate situation? Now, suddenly, here comes the Coast Guard, who pulls you out of the water. They give you food and drink and warm, dry clothing, and take you to safety. This is a picture of what it means to be "saved." It is the rescue and the resulting state of safety.

Paul says that Christ has saved you and me from God's wrath. God's wrath is His hot anger against sinners. But Christ took that wrath, that hot anger, on Himself, ***on the cross***. By Christ's death and by His rising to life again, we have been saved. So this is the rescue. Now we are saved; now we are safe. Being saved is another way to talk about what Christ's passion has produced for us.

Now, one more term, "reconciled."

"While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son," Paul says, *"through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation"* (5:10-11). Here, think of two parties who are at loggerheads. In fact, one is the avowed enemy of the other. But somehow, these two parties are brought back together. Peace is made, and reconciliation is achieved.

This, too, is a picture of what Christ's passion has done for us. It has reconciled us to God and brought us back into a state of peace with God. We were God's enemies, estranged from Him. But now, through Christ's peace-making death on the cross, we have been brought back to God. The hostilities have ended. Peace is established. *"We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (5:1).

Dear friends, we have been justified, saved, and reconciled. These are all ways to describe the glorious work that God has done for us in Christ. The "what" of Christ's suffering has produced a great big "so what" in our lives and for eternal life. Christ's prediction of His passion has led to justification, salvation, and reconciliation. All these "big words" stand for "big realities" that are ours in Christ.

But now there's one more "passion prediction" in our readings today.

I don't know if you noticed it, but it is a prediction of our passion and suffering. Things will happen to us. Yes, we shall suffer in this life. Indeed, we shall suffer precisely because we follow Jesus Christ. Jesus predicts it. He says, **"If anyone wants to follow Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me!"**

Taking up our cross means we must be prepared to suffer and die. Following Jesus, being His disciples means we shall suffer in this life. The world will be against us. We shall be persecuted. The devil will attack us, trying to destroy our faith. Our sinful flesh will mislead us. We need to put that Old Adam to death. Dying daily to sin, dying to self, is part of taking up our cross.

Our own suffering, our own passion, is predicted. But this, too, will produce good things. No, not our justification or salvation or reconciliation with God. Only Christ's passion can deliver those divine gifts. But now that we have these great gifts, we can endure the sufferings that happen in our life. And even those sufferings can produce good results.

Paul puts it like this: *"We also glory in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character, and character, hope"*

(5:3-4). You see, because of our peace with God, we can now rejoice even in the midst of suffering. We know there is something more, much more, than the afflictions we suffer in this world and this short life. ***Our joy is greater than our afflictions!*** Therefore, suffering will produce perseverance - the ability to bear up over the long haul under the suffering. We cannot muster this on our own just by being stoic and keeping a stiff upper lip. This is not mere human endurance. It is a bearing-up borne of the Gospel, worked by the Spirit.

“Tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character.” Character means a tested quality. It is the quality of a metal that has been tried under fire and found to be genuine. Being put through the fire - many times, over many years - will purify and strengthen our faith, burning away the trash. That is the character of a well-tested faith. But that only comes through enduring tribulation. The fire is not pleasant at the time, but God is doing something through it. He is working in you to give you a strong and tested Christian character.

“Tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character, and character, hope.” This is what we have, then: ***hope.*** It is the hope of the glory to come. When all other supports give way, when there is nothing left in this life to lift our spirits, when it looks like our world is falling apart, we still have this hope to hold on to. Hope is knowing what is in store for us because of Christ. We can't see it yet, but we know that it's coming.

And when the sufferings of this life finally do end, this hope will not disappoint us. What we have been hoping for all these years - this hope will not put us to shame. Because the outcome, the final result, will be just as God has said it would be: everlasting life with Christ and all of His saints, in glory, in a restored creation, better than ever, forever.

What a hope we have! And it all comes back to the passion of the Christ, which He Himself predicted and endured for our sake. And this passion of His has produced such marvellous results: By Christ's death and resurrection, we have been justified, saved, and reconciled. What's more, God is producing endurance, character, and hope in us, even in the midst of suffering. Dear friends, *“the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us”* (Romans 5:5). Amen.

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

PRAYER FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You for Your marvellous grace to sinful people. You dwell in a light that no one can approach, but You have now shown Yourself to us in Your Son Jesus Christ. Through Him we

approach You confidently as Your dear children. You are the Creator and Ruler of this vast universe, yet You are concerned for the happiness and good of each one of us. Accept our humble worship and praise, and grant that we may continue in our gracious fellowship with You through Jesus Christ.

We thank You, Father, that You have chosen us not to suffer Your anger, but to receive Your forgiveness, and to possess salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for us. Move us to hear and obey Your Son through whom You have spoken to us. Move us to follow the example that Jesus has given us. Open our hearts, that Jesus may continue to live in them. Grant that we may cling to Jesus as the only way through which people may come into Your glorious presence. Move us, both by the way in which You shape our lives, and through Your promises in the Gospel, to make our own commitment to You, in love, praise, and adoration.

Grant that we may walk in obedience to Your commandments, test all things by Your Word, cling to what is good, and have nothing to do with any kind of evil. Make us holy by Your Spirit to live the life of holiness, to which Christ has called us, and keep us free of all fault until His coming.

Father, since You desire all people to be saved and to come to know the truth, give us opportunities to proclaim Your Gospel to the ends of the earth. Inspire us to work, pray, and give for the salvation of people who as yet do not know You.

Grant that all in authority in our country may respect Your holy will. Protect from harm those who are in danger. Give peace and harmony to the nations on earth.

Make our homes harmonious places where the Holy Spirit is present with His power and wisdom. Give spiritual insight to all mothers. Grant all fathers godly leadership. Give all children an obedient spirit.

Have mercy on all who have gathered here today. Support the weak; correct the disobedient. Comfort us whenever we are troubled in body, mind, or spirit. We ask these things, and everything else we need, in the name of Your Son Jesus, who gave His life as a ransom for us all. Amen.

Article: The Age Old New Age Movement

What is the oldest religion in the world? Christianity is the oldest religion, for its origin is in God's eternal plan (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9). But what is the oldest religion in the world? Which religion was in the world first?

Christianity is as old as Genesis 3:15, when God, through the Gospel, brought Adam and Eve to faith in the promised Saviour. But in a sense, the New Age Movement is even older. It goes back to Genesis 3:5 when Satan deceitfully promised that Adam and Eve would be "as gods." The basic temptation of the New Age Movement is man's idolatrous desire to be God. The "new age" it promises is

already here. It is “*this present evil world*” (Galatians 1:4).

The teaching of the New Age Movement is fairly simple. It is hard for Christians to understand only because it is so totally different from what the Bible teaches. It seems complicated because there are so many facets and forms, so many versions and varieties of it, with a multitude of teachers and organisations pushing it. It seems like a trackless forest with dense and tangled underbrush. But the basics are simple.

The New Age Movement is pantheism, the old teaching that god (small “g”!) is everything and everything is god. It is the old lie behind Hinduism and Buddhism. It has been in the East for many centuries and has occasionally cropped up in the West. It has been coming on strong for two or three hundred years in Western civilisation. It is the idea behind moral relativism (if everything is god, everything is good). It is also behind Ecumenism and Globalism (one world religion, one world government).

Pantheism is directly opposed to Christianity, to the truth about God and man. It is so exactly contrary to the Bible’s teaching that a more complete contradiction can hardly be imagined. Whenever we affirm Christian truth, we deny pantheism.

For pantheism, everything is god and god is everything. We should not capitalise “god” in the pantheist sense because the word has no personal meaning. For pantheism, god is a thing, an “it.” For the pantheist, god is not outside the world but in the world as the soul is in the body. This fictitious god is the soul of the world, a spiritual but impersonal concept of “nature.” Everything is both material and spiritual. Everything is somewhat divine, a little bit of god. The rock, the tree, the bug, the man are all little outcroppings of this god.

Pantheism teaches the transmigration of souls (popularly called “reincarnation”). The idea is that when the body dies, the soul joins up with a new body. Successive transmigrations should mean upward mobility until the soul is finally reabsorbed into god like a drop of water into the ocean. Personal identity ceases.

Nothing could be more contrary to the Bible. The Bible teaches: God made the world and is not part of it; God is personal, in fact, tri-personal (there is only one God, but the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each true God); the soul of the human individual goes to heaven or hell when the body dies and will be reunited with that same body in the resurrection.

Pantheism teaches works righteousness. For whether the next transmigration is a step up or a step down depends on works. Various forms of pantheism disagree about the details, about which works work. But like all religions of human or demonic origin, pantheism is a religion of law alone, teaching only human works righteousness. Only Christianity is the religion of Christ’s righteousness, given to us by God through the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ, received through God-given faith.

Only in Christianity are we told to hope not because of what we have done – rather,

in spite of what we have done (sin!). We hope because of what Someone else has done for us. Jesus Christ, God and Man in one Person, lived the perfect life and died the perfect death. He kept the laws we have broken and suffered and died in our place for our breaking them. For His sake alone, we have forgiveness, life, and salvation.

The New Age Movement is preposterous. It is foolish, stupid, and silly. But that does not mean that it will not be popular. For fallen man is spiritually foolish, stupid, and silly. Fallen man is prone to fall for things like the New Age Movement, as the long history of pantheism shows.

We are surrounded by the New Age Movement. It fits with everything that does not fit with Christianity. It loves evolution (the impersonal development of this world, with no Creator outside). It pushes moral relativism (if god is developing in everything, everything must be morally good in some way). It embraces Communism (impersonal, evolutionary development in economics). It rejects as bigotry every claim to speak the real truth or to know the one true God, for it wants to make truth subjective and to deny any real religious differences.

In our preaching and teaching, we must warn others against the New Age Movement. But that does not mean that we must become experts in this field. We should know it well enough that we can warn people specifically. But every time we teach Biblical truth, we are opposing the New Age Movement. And every Biblical truth we teach is against the New Age Movement. So our most important study, as always, remains the Word of God.

We have a fight on our hands. We need the Sword of the Spirit in our hands (Ephesians 6:17).

Children's Message:

Can you ride a bike? Without training wheels? Maybe you're pretty good at riding a bike. But learning to ride a bike can be scary. Especially without any training wheels. Maybe when you first began to learn, you fell a lot and hurt your knees and elbows. Maybe you were a little upset because you couldn't learn to ride a bike on your own. But then your mum or dad came and helped you. They helped you get right back on your bike. They held the back of it to help you keep your balance so you wouldn't fall. Finally, with mum or dad's help, you learned to ride your bike! The hard time you had learning was worth it!



Learning to ride a bike reminds me of God's Word to us in the Bible. Our Second Reading today, from the Apostle Paul's Letter to the Romans, says this:

“We also glory in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character, and character, hope” (Rom 5:3-4). Did you get that? God says that we glory, that is, we rejoice even in tribulation because tribulation produces perseverance and character and hope.

Now, those are big words, but let me explain. Tribulation is when we go through something very hard, painful, scary, or sad. When have you had tribulation? Maybe when you were learning to ride your bike! But while you had tribulation, your mum or dad came and comforted you and helped you. They cheered you on so you had the strength to keep going. Because of your parent’s help, you had hope that you would ride that bike.

That’s what Jesus does for us when we have tribulation - not just learning to ride a bike, but all the other times we’ll be scared or sad or in pain. Because He took away our sins by dying for us on the cross, He’s always with us. So then He comforts us, He helps us, and He cheers us so we can continue with the strength He gives us. When we see how Jesus helps us, we start to trust Him more and believe in His promise to save us - not just from our tribulation in this life, but in heaven where there’s no tribulation at all. His death on the cross and His rising again did that for us, too. Since even death couldn’t stop Jesus, we have hope that He’ll always be with us in all of life’s adventures.

Thank You, Jesus, for giving us hope through all our tribulations. Be with me in my life until the day comes when You call me into Your heavenly kingdom. Amen.

Trip to America

Pastor is still planning a trip to the USA later this year.

The latest plan is to stay about three nights in Cincinnati, making that our base as we visit the Ark Encounter and the Creation Museum. We shall then travel on to Decatur, about 5 hours from Cincinnati, where on Saturday, the 10th of August, a fellowship get-together with members of the ULMA and the ACLC is scheduled. The next day, Sunday the 11th, a combined worship service of the ULMA, ACLC, and AELC will be held. This service will acknowledge the altar and pulpit fellowship we hold with one another. It promises to be a wonderful weekend!

If you wish to come along, **please let pastor know by the end of February.** Depending on numbers, the travel agent may be able to work on cheaper group discounts and bookings. Pastor has also received offers from ULMA families who are willing to put us up for a couple of nights while in Decatur.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wednesday, 28 Feb 3rd mid-week Lenten Service	3 March 3 Lent	10 March 4 Lent
7.30pm Toowoomba Hymns: 61, 58 part 1, 320, 48 v3	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC Wednesday, 6 March 4th mid-week Lenten Service 7.30pm Aubigny Hymns: 53, 55 part 1, 60, 48 v3	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR Wednesday, 13 March 5th mid-week Lenten Service 7.30pm Oakey Hymns: 57 part 1, 171, 57 part 2, 48 v3
Sunday, 3 March		
READINGS: Exodus 20:1-17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; John 2:13-25		
HYMNS: 345 270 457 (53 333) 75		
Sunday, 10 March		
READINGS: Numbers 21:4-9; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21		
HYMNS: 79 171 188 (148 847) 754		

Congregation AGM dates:

Our Saviour Lowood: Sunday, March 3, after service.

Saturday, 9 March, 10.00am. CoC/Sem Committee meeting at Bethlehem Toowoomba. Please note that this is the CoC AGM, so elections will be held. Please ensure each congregation is represented.