

Southside Worship Online

20 September 2020, 16th Sunday of Pentecost [Year A] – Ps Richard Moors

Please go to <https://livestream.com/ggservices/ssuc> to access our worship service.
Families with children are encouraged to use family faith materials Ps Richard Moors has made available.

Gathering with God

The Lord our God is great and to be highly praised.

We come to worship.

The Lord our God is great beyond our understanding.

We come to worship.

The Lord our God is loving and full of mercy.

We come to worship.

Amen.

Song

Waymaker

Prayer of Approach & Confession

Loving God, Jesus showed us
that all people are your favourites.

It's hard for us to imagine
how you can love everyone
in a big crowd at a football game.
It's much harder to imagine
you loving every person
among the millions on earth.
But you do,
and that's really cool,
because that includes each of us.

Thank you God
for being so big-hearted
and kind to us all.
Almighty God,
we don't always know how we got to where we are,
and we certainly don't always know where we are going;
we don't always choose the right path,
and we certainly don't always follow it;
we don't always deal well with the struggles of life,
and we don't always give thanks for the joys of life either;
we don't always think of the effects that our choices
cause to others, near and far.
We are too often selfish,
wanting what we want no matter what the cost to others.

Almighty God, forgive us, reassure us
and cradle us within your forgiveness.
Amen

Scripture Reading – Philippians 1:21-30

Sermon

Song

Refresh My Heart

Offering

Take a moment to set aside your offering to God's mission and pray a prayer of blessing over it.

Prayers of the People

Loving God we stop to pray for our world.
We pray for your church, that you will help us to live out our calling.
Help us to live in a way that demonstrates you to the world.
Help us to show your love and speak your truth.
Where there is division help us work together, to see the things we hold in common.
For our world around us, we pray for those places where there is war and violence.
May we your church be peacemakers, to bring your peace.
Help us to challenge leaders who seek violence.
For those in the world who are alone, through covid or other issues.
Surround them with people who can be there for them.
Help us to reach out, to be there for them. May we be a listening ear.
For those who are ill.
We pray that you will bring them healing.
May we as your church give them support and comfort.
Help your will to be done, and lead us in your paths.
Amen.

Song

In Christ Alone

Affirmation / Blessing

Go out in the strength of God's gracious gifts.
Live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ.
Stand firm in one spirit.
Strive with one mind for the faith of the gospel.

And may the power and the presence of God go with you.
May the Call of Christ lead you into fruitful labour.
And may the Holy Spirit fill you with the joy of grace.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Have you ever had to make a big decision? It could be about what sport you play, is soccer better than cricket? Do you do netball or dance? It might be do you have KFC or Red Rooster for lunch? As you get older, if possible they get even more difficult. Do you do this job or that job? Recently the church council has been reviewing my position and deciding whether to renew my contract, which meant we had to decide do we want to stay in Brisbane or to move again. Paul as he writes to the Philippians starts with an even bigger decision. "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain." At this point Paul is in prison, probably in Rome, and he is trying to work out what he hopes for his future. Does he hope that he will be released so that he can continue to travel and share the message of Jesus? Or does he hope that he will die and go to be with Jesus? Now we have tended to read this and think that Paul is thinking is it earth or heaven he wants to be in. But some commentators suggest maybe he is actually thinking about how his death as a martyr might point other towards Jesus. So we need to be careful not to see this as Paul deciding if he is better to stay on earth or to live in the wonder of heaven.

But it is clear that this decision is a tricky one for Paul, he realises that if he remains in the flesh, if he is released and keeps living then there is a whole heap of work that he can do, so much spreading of the gospel. But he knows that if he dies he goes to be with Jesus, and how wonderful that will be. It's a real dilemma for Paul, because he sees benefits in both, and really he favours going to be with Jesus, but he ultimately decides "but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you." It is far more important for him to stay on earth and to go around sharing the gospel message. That is something for others not for him.

This can be a challenge for us as Christians. It can be easy for us to feel heaven is a wonderful thing, and let's focus on heading there. We might think about how we make sure that is a reality. And yet the most important thing for us to do is to be thinking of how we are living in the world to share the gospel message. So we sometimes need to realise what Paul discovers, the Christian life is not about what we get out of it, but often what we put in to help others.

And so Paul says to the Christians in Philippi "Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel," As our attention moves for heaven in the future to the world today, then we need to be working on living our life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. 20 years ago we probably would have pointed to our WWJD bracelet, for those who missed them they reminded Christians to think about What Would Jesus Do? We need to think about how we are living as Christ's representatives in the world, as an example to others of who Jesus was. But not only does Paul call the believers to live out a manner for themselves, but he wants them to be standing together. They are to work together as the church. In his commentary Tom Wright says: "The Philippian's public behaviour, as he says, must match up to the gospel. They must not acquire a reputation for being uncivil, boorish or rude. They must be known as honest, reliable, good neighbours, even if people are accusing or attacking them. They mustn't be intimidated into retreating into a private ghetto where they can ignore the rest of the world and nurture their own faith away from it." We are called to be living out our faith in the community around us.

As we do that Paul says: "and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing." Paul recognised that there will be challenges. Some people will be uncomfortable with the Christian message and they might oppose it. Recently I saw a post on a community group on Facebook someone was complaining that a Christian group had put a flyer in his letterbox, and how dare they try to enforce their views on him. Others pointed out that was probably not worth getting worked up about, that Christians had the right to put forward their point of view and he could probably just not read the piece of paper. When we hear strong comments like that it can make us scared to speak up, but Paul wants us to remember that we should not be intimidated. Don't let these sort of people scare us off from sharing that amazing message which we have. For Paul says: "For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well— since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have." Probably not the greatest promotional statement, but if you think about it, Paul is saying that if you suffer, then you are doing well like him. Just think about how you might have looked up to leaders in the church over the years, which is always scary

when I think that young people might look up to me in the way that I looked up to my youth leaders. But as we struggle, we know that we are doing well, we are following in the steps of Paul.

So we see that Paul challenges us to make the decision to focus on our life here on earth and to live out the Christian life. We are called to live the Christian life and to spread the Christian message. Now this is not about trying to enforce a list of Christian morals on the world. I think some groups in Christianity can get caught up with this, but I don't believe that is what Paul or Jesus call us to. Rather we are to think about how we live out our lives to be like Christ. To ask ourselves how do we live in a way like Jesus so that people see that there is something different about us. Now that might seem unlikely, but believe me, if we are treating people in the way that Jesus treated other, then people will notice that there is a difference. When people might oppose us and we respond with love rather than violence, then they will notice, and often over time they will be changed.

Now we need to note that it is not just about living in a different way, but being able to verbalise that. Imagine you decide to help with a soup kitchen for poor and needy people. Over time someone sees you there, the joy you might bring, the work you do, and they ask you why you are involved. Do you say it's because you care about people. Or do you say that you believe it is a way that you can live out your faith in Jesus. You don't need to know a gospel presentation, but you can point back to your faith as the reason for what you do. Over time that will hopefully raise conversations with people, and over time you will share with them. Don't fret when you don't share the whole of your faith in one conversation and the person prays the sinners prayer, it rarely works like that. But know you are on the journey of evangelism.

So we are called to live and to speak the life of Jesus. To do that well we need to be learning more and more about the life of Jesus. If we are to copy someone, we need to learn about them. I am reading through my collection of Doctor Who books. And I try to listen to the audio adventures of the doctor that I am reading about, so that I get their voice in my head when I read. I need to do some work to get it right. Maybe you have done that with books, you might watch a Harry Potter movie if you are going to read that book, or the Lord of the Rings movies to get the voices of the characters to read. We need to be learning more and more of Jesus, so that we get used to his voice, get used to his actions so that we can copy them in the world around us. That is our calling in this world.