

Newsletter

6th December 2020

Sunday's Reading 2 Peter 3: 3-13

Ps. Andrew Everson will be bringing us the message

Some Prayers of the people

- Pray for members of our church family who are not well, undergoing tests or recovering from surgery.
- Please continue to pray for John & Dorothy Kester and give thanks for a wonderful improvement in Sue Kuchel's health.
- Pray for Christmas outreach programs going into the schools next week. Naracoorte North & South Primary schools next Monday & Sunrise later in the week.
- Please pray for the Community Care Hampers- pray that the love of God, peace & joy will be part of the hampers given to the needy. May they feel the presence of Jesus & the love of the community in their difficult time,
- Please pray for Simone Owen as she finalises the Christmas presentation to the Sunrise School.
- Pray for church council & elders as they vision the direction of ministry for 2021.

Notices

Friendly Thursday this Thursday morning @10.30am.

Sunday School picnic: Sunday 13 Dec will be held from 12:00 noon at the Swimming Lake
BYO chairs, drinks, and a picnic lunch.

Christmas Hampers

The Combined Churches Christmas Hamper Committee is again busy preparing to provide food hampers to needy folk in our community so they can enjoy a Christmas meal.

We need donations of non-perishable food e.g. canned fruit or vegetables, Christmas puddings or tins of ham.

We have been providing hampers for nearly 30 years and last year we provided over 50 hampers.

You will find a box for donations in the foyer to Blackwell Hall. We depend on your help so we can help others. Thanks Jill D.

Property Committee Meeting

Tuesday 8th December 7.30pm at the church.

Council Connect

Congratulations to Bob Kester & Joel Munro on being elected as Elders for a 2-year term.

Church council members are Trevor Barnett (Chair), Bronte Cobbledick, Bob Kester, Joel Munro, Robbie Williams, John Ruck (Treasurer), Assistant Pastor Simone Owen, Pastor Andrew Everson

Sincere thanks to Carol Lawrie who has served this year as minute secretary.

Council Visioning Day:

On January 16, council will consider the priorities and directions for this church as we move into the new year. Chairperson and secretary to be appointed.

Covid restrictions revised again: We have the capacity to have 207 people on the church site. The problem is that we are allowed only 50 in the church, 31 in Blackwell hall and 40 in Wesley Hall. (excluding "staff" which could include musicians, minister, data, sound tech). We sometimes have up to 115 at our services.

So, in order to avoid turning anyone away, we will be placing a loudspeaker in Wesley Hall. Council members and people preparing morning tea may be asked to go Wesley Hall to make room until the children go out to Sunday School, and then go back into the church or Blackwell Hall.

Disabled Parking:

At the AGM it was decided to use the drive through at the front of the church as disability parking (enough for 3 cars) Please help to make this work for those who need it.

Child Safety:

It is important that parents help ensure that the children remain safe on our premises, particularly after the service and kid's church. Please keep gates and fire doors shut so that young children are not exposed to traffic on the roads.

The church itself will be locked soon after the service completes and during morning tea.

Mid-Week Bible Reading

Mark 1:1-8 *John the Baptist prepares the way*

1 *The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, ² as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:*

*'I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way' –*

³ *'a voice of one calling in the wilderness,*

*"Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him."*

⁴ *And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their*

sins, they were baptised by him in the River Jordan. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt round his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: 'After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

Mark's Gospel hits us with a challenge in its first line.

"The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God". No softening us up. No messing about. Mark tells us in one sentence what he is on about. He is going to tell us good news. This good news, this story, is a lengthy narrative – it has a beginning and presumably a middle and an end. So, settle down, he seems to be saying, and listen up. This is the good news about Jesus, the Messiah, the anointed one, the Son of God.

Mark opens with a reference to the Old Testament prophet Isaiah who wrote:

I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way' – 'a voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him."

Christ's coming didn't just spring out of nowhere. There is continuity between the Old Testament scriptures and the New. This is a continuing story of God's dealing with his people, the human history of the world that starts with a marriage of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and ends with a marriage of Christ and his Church in a new heaven on a renewed earth; God's Kingdom finally and completely come.

John himself was clothed like an Old Testament prophet. Like Elijah he wore simple rough clothes and ate simple foods and like Elijah, John the Baptist had a confronting message for the people of his time – a call to return to God; a call to repent.

The belief of the Jewish people at the time of Jesus was that before the Messiah comes, before God's kingdom comes, the prophet Elijah would come again to prepare the people as the prophet Malachi writes in Malachi 4.

'Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel.

'See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.'

This is a call to restore the people, as a community. People who have turned away to turn back to God; to seek to do his will again and to rely on him.

Jesus himself sees in John the Baptist the fulfilment of this prophecy. He tells his disciples in Mt 17:11, referring to John the Baptist, that Elijah has already come.

Mark continues his account:

And so, John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the River Jordan.

The idea is that if the one who will bring the Kingdom of God near is coming then God's people will get themselves ready, turn back to God and be forgiven. And as a sign of this repentance, this turning back to God and receiving his forgiveness John baptised people in the River, the water symbolic of forgiveness; symbolic of God washing away each person's sin.

And as John does this he points forward to Jesus. He says:

‘After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.’

Now this is a really remarkable statement. It confirms that John himself understood his ministry in the way that the Old Testament scriptures did – that he was the messenger sent ahead of the coming of God’s Kingdom. In John’s gospel, John the Baptist actually replies to a direct question from the Temple authorities for him to explain who he was by quoting the words of Isaiah:

“I am the voice of one calling in the desert ‘Make straight the way for the Lord’”

But more than this, John is pointing to a most significant thing that Jesus Christ, Emanuel that is “God with Us” will do for us. He will baptise us with the Holy Spirit. That is, he will immerse us in the Holy Spirit, push us through the sheep dip, and drench us in the Holy Spirit.

And about this Holy Spirit: Jesus, himself, tells us in John’s gospel, chapter 14:

‘If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

And so, as John the Baptist describes it, we will have this baptism by Jesus in the Holy Spirit. When we believe in Jesus, when we turn to him in repentance and simply accept the forgiveness that he offers us through his work on the cross, then Christ is in us and we are in Christ. The Holy Spirit is Christ’s gift of himself to us – a counsellor, an advocate, the Spirit of peace, the Spirit of truth who takes Jesus’ words and knowledge, making them known to us. Paul tells us in Ephesians 1 that because we are one with Christ through the Holy Spirit then there is the same incredible power that raised Christ from the dead working in us.

This is the power and the knowledge to know, and to love the truth and to obey.

So, this baptism by Jesus is not simply a sign of repentance and forgiveness, it is that certainly, but it is more. It is a sign of belonging to Jesus in a most intimate way. Forgiven and restored. Resting in the power of Christ.

Christ in us, and we in Christ.

Andrew Everson