



News Letter

14 April 2020

Our Church on-line

Naracoorte Uniting Church web site: <https://www.naracoorteuca.org.au/>

Many thanks again to Oriel, Simone and Wayne who worked to produce the Good Friday and the Easter Sunday podcasts. Looking at the web site statistics "hits" it seems that many people found the time to download the services and listen.

Service this Sunday – Stuart Martyn will bring us the message "Just Like Us", *John 20:19-31*

Prayers of the people

Please get prayer requests to me by **Thursday** so I can include them in the service.

- In particular we continue to pray for communities across the world who are confronting this pandemic from situations of extreme distress – poverty, war, oppression or inadequate medical services. And we pray for the work of the Barnabas Fund, Compassion and Open Doors as they continue to serve vulnerable Christian communities.
- We pray for those in our own church community who are ill at this time including John Kester and Kay Hocking. Kay is currently in Flinders Medical Centre.

Mid-week reading

1 Peter 1:3-9 New International Version

Praise to God for a living hope

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The Christian understanding of life, (each of our lives and all of life lived on earth), is that our life leads somewhere. That is, history has a destination. Life is not circular, with

reincarnations following each other indefinitely. And each life, and life in general, is purposeful with the purpose given by our creator.

When Peter speaks of God giving us **new birth** into a **living hope** he is saying something about life's destination and the expectation that Christians have about the future. Everyone who has the courage to live expects something. Most of what we hope for is not permanent, it has a season and it will come to an end – riches, success, family, home, even the memory of our lives will eventually fade and die. Most of our hope is in this sense a “dead hope”.

But a living hope is a hope that always remains alive. It's an expectation of life. Life without end. The change in outlook that we experience in embracing that living hope is like being born anew. And it is being born anew because God forgives us, cleanses us and makes our lives new.

We embrace that living hope when we place our faith in Jesus Christ. We understand that just as Christ rose to life, so will we, and that the whole of human life and history is driving to an endpoint – a new earth and a new heaven.

But if all of life has a purpose, God's purpose, then even the struggles and trials, the frightening, deadly, and sometimes horrific events and circumstances of our lives must mean something important in God's eyes. Peter writes that we, who have an eternal heavenly inheritance, are “shielded by God's power”. But this doesn't mean we are shielded from pain and suffering. Suffering and pain are real and part of being human. But what God is shielding us from is any loss of faith. Faith itself is God's gift and he gives it to us, and then protects his gift.

We are not always taken out of harm's way by our Heavenly Father, sometimes his path for us is to go through the experience, and to be changed by it, or perhaps even for us to change something in the world by passing through this trial. In this latter sense we share in Christ's sufferings, because these certainly changed the world forever. The direction of any change in us, or any change we make in the world will be positive if we go through the trial with Christ, knowing the living hope that we have been born into, knowing that our faith and our live eternal is shielded in God's love.

The change in us, the change in the world that God wants, is not usually won with an exercise of power, but just as Jesus demonstrated, it more often requires a difficult, painful experience, passed through with courage and love.

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