




News Letter

9 June 2020

Our Church on-line

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

for the service on-line and for another great Kid's talk from Fiona Fulwood. Or listen on your Phone or Tablet. Download the *Church Central*  app from the apps store and find Naracoorte Uniting Church.

When can Church Start again?

The current Government guidelines allow only 20 people in one room. So, at Naracoorte, church "in the church" is a bit difficult at present. **If the regulations were to be relaxed** to allow up to 50 in one room then we would be able to use the church and the hall and start services again.

Some congregations in our Hub (as numbers allow) are preparing to start up or indeed have started, (Lameroo and Pinnaroo and, at the time of writing, possibly Bordertown/ Buckingham/ Mundulla). Others are waiting for restrictions to further ease.

On- Line Service this Sunday 14 June

Joel Munro will be bringing us the message this Sunday

Reading: **Genesis 3:1-5** "Fire of God"

Some Prayers of the people

Gracious Father we pray:

- that as our State and our nation comes out of Covid-19 restrictions that commerce and industry would again flourish and expand. We pray for optimism, courage, and enterprise.
- for an Assistant Pastor – we pray that God will call the right person for this role with the gifts and graces to connect well with people and with the maturity of faith that places trust in Jesus Christ and commitment to his service.
- for the Christian church across the world that we will continue to be faithful to Christ in the way we think and act. May we continue to declare the gospel and watch for the opportunities to cooperate with the Holy Spirit when, and where, we see him working.
- we continue to pray for those among us who are ill and those preparing for procedures or recovering from operations. We pray Lord that you are close to people in need, or in trouble, and close to those who are dying. We pray for your grace and peace.

Mid-week Bible Reading

Philippians 3:4b-14

Paul is writing to the Philippian church and contrasting the Christian understanding of being made right with God through the sheer grace of God's forgiveness by faith in Jesus Christ, with the worldly idea that righteousness comes from ritual, birth rights, and observing the customs of the Jewish law.

He writes:

3 Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. **2** Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. **3** For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who

boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh – ⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

Paul presents a series of interlocking contrasts to describe the faith we hold:

- *Faith in human capacity (flesh) versus faith in Christ (Spirit)*

Paul knows that God is not just the God of a select group who are particularly pious and observant of all the religious law. God is for all people so that Paul now considers any feeling of superiority that he may have felt as a loyal and observant Jewish man to be “rubbish”. Elsewhere, (e.g. Romans 1-3) he makes it clear that it is actually impossible for us to be perfectly sinless or “righteous”. We are inherently imperfect. We can have “no confidence” in the “flesh”. That’s not the way to serve God. The way to serve God is “by his Spirit”, putting our confidence (our faith) in Jesus.

- *Losing all things versus gaining Christ*

The contrast is between an inward focus on self and self-achievement. A person is isolated from God being inwardly focused like a droplet of water on oil. On the other hand, a person gains everything by being “found in Christ” – (not absorbed into Christ so that personhood is lost) – but fully knowing Christ and being known by him; and so exchanging or losing “everything” but gaining Christ who is more than everything.

- *Knowing Christ is knowing both the power of the resurrection and the suffering of Christ*

The resurrection of Jesus is the power of the gospel. It is the surety of new life and it’s this power that Paul wants to know by being “in Jesus Christ”. But being “in Christ” is both sharing in the resurrection and in Christ’s suffering. New life came for everyone through Christ’s death and suffering on the cross and to faithfully know and follow Jesus Christ means to willingly accept the suffering that comes from living in a world that is far from perfect. At the very least it means to face and acknowledge to God that we have done wrong, said wrong things, thought wrongly about God and others – and this will be painful. But to suffer with Christ may mean for us to bear up under pain and sickness without losing faith and hope. It may mean for some Christians to face persecution and even death without denying Christ. Paul talks about “the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings” and it’s this “fellowship”, this intimate connection to God through his Spirit that allows Paul, and us, to face suffering, even seemingly pointless suffering, with confidence – even joyful confidence – in the power of the resurrection.

- *There is a tension between the present and the future*

The key point is that God calls us into a future. God has taken hold of us. He takes the initiative and draws us into a perfect future. Rather than we having to somehow find within ourselves the courage and commitment to grasp hold of God, Christ has taken hold of us and in his power, we can take hold of him.

What is certain at this present time is the surety of God's grip on us, not that we are perfect. What is certain about the future is that we will be made perfect.

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