



News Letter

14 May 2020

Our Church on-line

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

Thanks again to our worship team for the service on-line and for another great Kid's talk from Fiona.

Service this Sunday, 17 May; Reading: **John 14: 15-27**

We will celebrate Holy Communion on Sunday so, if you wish to take communion in this way please be prepared with bread and wine or juice.

Some Prayers of the people

- We give thanks gracious Father that the Covid-19 pandemic in our country has so far been controlled to the extent that restrictions can be eased. We pray for our leaders and our medical personnel working through these issues and we pray for those companies and individuals whose businesses and livelihoods have been affected by the lockdown measures and worldwide impacts. We pray for faith, wisdom and for courage and good leadership across governments, businesses, and the Church.
- We give thanks Lord for the work of the bible translation taking place at Ernabella. We give thanks that the translation of the shorter bible has been completed and copies on sale in the KPY lands.
- We pray for the bible translators and for David and Lil Barnett as the initial drafts of the remaining OT books are prepared.
- We pray Lord for Jono and Ann Osborne working with Hope International in Uganda in difficult times.
- And gracious Father we pray for your healing hand to be upon Lyn Pitt, John Kester, Kay Hocking and Dean Williams.

Mid-week Bible Reading

Acts 17:22-31

New International Version

²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: 'People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So, you are ignorant of the very thing you worship – and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. ²⁴ 'The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is

not far from any one of us. ²⁸ “For in him we live and move and have our being.” As some of your own poets have said, “We are his offspring.”

²⁹ ‘Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone – an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.’

Paul is preaching the gospel to a pagan people – a people who have many gods, and many shrines; gods who needed to be honoured and placated with ritual and offerings.

So, Paul talks about the God who doesn’t need our worship at all – “he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything”. This is the one God who made everything and to whom the whole universe belongs, the God who gives life and being to humankind.

This one God made us in his image. We didn’t make him in our image or in the image of anything created – “an image made by human design and skill”.

This is the God who didn’t fit the pagan Greek concept of god and so was unknown to them. And yet they could know him, after all the Greek philosophers understood the need for God the creator and sustainer of all things. This God is not a remote Deity that may have created the world and is no longer personally involved in the way it works. Because this God “is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being”.

Not only is this God personally involved in the world he has created, he is a God of justice. He defines right and wrong in this world because it is *his* world. The pagan gods were understood to be capricious in their actions and mostly concerned with their own affairs and their own prestige – they needed the placation of worship.

The God that Paul preaches is concerned with the actions of humankind because they bear his image. And he has directly intervened in the world. Emphatically he has demonstrated his concern for righteousness and justice through the resurrection of Jesus Christ – the one perfectly innocent man, condemned by human justice but vindicated by God’s justice.

And this is another point of difference between the pagan view of life and the biblical view. Life has meaning and purpose and a God defined destination.

Paul’s analysis is very relevant for today. We live in a pagan world with many gods of our own making and we try to construct our own, contested, and capricious ideas of what is right and wrong. Justice is far from universal and life’s purpose for many has become a meaningless concept. Our job as Christians is to acknowledge that God is God, and to worship him - not because he needs our worship, but for our own sakes. Because (as God knows) we need to be reconciled with the source of all life and purpose. And it is our job as Christians to continue to subvert the pagan culture we live in with the message of the gospel of grace.

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