

"I am among you as one who serves"

Greetings all: I hope your Christmas celebrations went well, and that you and your families felt the blessing of the incarnated God in Christ.

LET US PRAY:

Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son, and for your plan to reach us in that way. Bless us as we worship, and redeem us.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HYMN: AHB 85 by Frances Jane van Alstyne 1820—1915

(A favourite hymn – going back to sitting in the back pews of the Birkenhead Methodist Church – probably passing notes to the young ladies!)

1. To God be the glory, Great things he has done,
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
Who yielded his life, an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in—

*Praise the Lord!, Praise the Lord! Let the earth hear his voice
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give him the glory! Great things he has done*

2. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God!
And every offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.
3. Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be,
Our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.

BIBLE READINGS:

- Luke 22:24—30

A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be the greatest. Jesus said to them, The kings of the gentiles Lord it over them and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater the one who is at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are the ones who have stood by me in my trials. So that you and drink at my table in my kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel .

“I am among you as one who serves”

- Luke 22:27

For who is greater the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves

This reading follows the celebration of the Passover after which the dispute arose between the disciples as to who was considered the greatest. Our Lord's response is crystal clear.....

- 1 Corinthians 2:1--8

And so it was with me brothers and sisters. When I came to you I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom - as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

We do however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

I recall hearing in a lecture at College (Vale Rev Dr Vern Cracknell) pastors are servants, but not servile. I think that is what Paul is saying to Timothy in his "epitaph" letter, as he awaited execution in a Roman prison under Nero.

"You then my son be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" and "for the spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives power, love and self discipline. So do not be ashamed...join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God."

Paul is awaiting execution for preaching about God who is NOT Caesar. Even in this circumstance he continued to mentor Timothy, and to elevate God in Christ. Paul will not be silenced. How often do we feel ashamed at being Church goers, Christians? During Advent my son made a T Shirt for me, it said on the back John3:16 in black lettering, then in larger print JESUS MAN with red cross between the words. It was worn a few times (not always with wifely approval). At the Mall a person said to me "I like your shirt!" (I was having my usual grumpy time because of the way Christmas is regarded in Australia: "silly season" et al.) I am not sure if I achieved anything, but it was a statement, and I felt better for having worn it.

There is a very poignant thing to notice about Paul's ministry. Paul was an evangelical Pharisee, a campaigner, a crusader when he encountered Christ en-route to hunt down "followers of the way", carrying arrest warrants from the Jerusalem temple. A tough guy, no nonsense man, until his encounter with the risen Christ. So how ever did that Saul, become the humble (I did not come with eloquence) caring, supportive Paul?? Because he was moderated by Jesus. What a change! Educated, aggressive, "go get 'em" Saul tells how he struggles to be the person Jesus wants him to be.

You will recall that Paul had some kind of illness? (2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Galatians 6) one theory is that he was epileptic. I have a theory that, based on his

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many self deprecating words, and the way he went about his business, maybe it was depression?

WHATEVER, Paul takes up the charge of his Saviour, as a servant leader, in all circumstances “I am among you as one who serves”.

In the year to come we could do worse than explore in what way we could also apply our Lord’s undertaking ...

SONG: *by Graham Kendrick*

1. From heaven you came helpless babe, entered our world, your glory veiled,
Not to be served, but to serve and give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the servant king, He calls us now to follow him
To bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the servant king.*

2. There in the garden of tears my heavy load he chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn, “Yet not my will, but yours” he said.
3. Come see his hands and his feet, the scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space, to cruel nails surrendered
4. So let us learn how to serve, and in our lives enthrone him,
Each others needs to prefer, for it is Christ we’re serving.

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PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD :

Focus Algeria. A large (largest in Africa) Islamic country of 44 million with a small Christian minority. Recently the authorities have been closing churches, leaving Pastors without their flock, and unemployed. Barnabas has funded support for Pastors:

Our God, we struggle to understand how people are so uncaring. We pray for the small persecuted church in Algeria, and the Pastors who focus on small house churches. Thank you that some Pastors are able to survive and minister to house groups, so keeping your Word alive. Bless the courageous and focused in difficult places such as Algeria.

We thank you for Barnabas and its ministry of support.

In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen

BENEDICTION: 2 Timothy 1: 6-9

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the gift God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. Amen

[This service was prepared by GRANT JEWELL \(0403 412 480\) for HopeNet SA](#)