

WHAT IS THE CURRENCY?

LENT WEEK 3

Welcome

Hi folks, its nice to share with you again. Grant here, seeking the word to share with you, and looking to our time together in the year ahead, praying for God's insight and to be relevant to the worship needs of all we reach in this ministry.....

PRAYER:

Lord God,

We worship you and give you thanks for all your mercies. We especially, at this time of Lent, remember your Son, our Lord Jesus, who gave up all for us, and has reunited us with you through his gift of life.

It's in his name that we pray. Amen

HYMN AHB 166 Anna Bartlett Warner 1820—1915

1. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so:
Little ones to him belong, they are weak but he is strong.

*Yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.*

2. Jesus loves me, this I know, as he loved so long ago,
taking children on his knee saying, "Let them come to me".

3. Jesus loves me still today, walking with me all the way,
Wanting as a friend to give light and love to all who live.

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PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD:

Focus: Nagorno- Karabakh—this is a region claimed by both Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus mountains. Over the last 10-15 years conflict has made life a misery for the Christian population, as Armenia (poor and surrounded by Islam) has fought Azerbaijan, supported also by the massive Turkish military, to exhaustion (both physical and financial). At present Christians are fleeing Nagorno to an unknown future with little resources (see page 8 of the current Barnabas Magazine. Barnabas, of course, is helping with financial assistance to many families.

Dear Father,

You know about our brothers and sisters in Nagorno. We pray for a lasting peace there. We also pray for the world to support Armenia in its struggle to assist so many fleeing from conflict. Bless Barnabas as it continues to help the needy there and elsewhere. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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Another story --- another Barnabas positive outcome.

A couple of years back the small Prospect Hill congregation decided to support the Brick kiln kids in Pakistan. We are now hearing about that ministry. Please check out the situation in Pakistan where Brick Kiln kids now have opportunities and support over the last few years, thanks to Barnabas. Prospect Hill church made an effort to support the brick kiln kids whose plight really hit home to the dairying community. They continue to support Barnabas because it gets to the centre of problems with (sometimes small) things- like roof repairs, or school books, cooking pots or shoes.

BIBLE READINGS:

- Mark 9: 31—36

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get thee behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said. "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life, will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it to gain the whole world, yet to forfeit your soul?"

- Philippians 2: 1—8

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, being in full accord and of one mind, do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

MESSAGE:

Have you heard of Bitcoin? The new cryptocurrency—it's said to be the first decentralised "E" currency of today. What does all that mean? I have no idea! If anyone can help me here please call me 0403412480!

We lived for a while in South Korea. One of the first things we needed to get our head around (apart from the language!) was the local currency. It was called the Won and there were at the time 400 Won to the Australian dollar, so to buy any big items you needed a

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wheelbarrow. Like it is now in Argentina. But one gets used to it because we like to eat and to live etc. And, lets face it, money is power in our world, and power is much sought after.

The Russian parliament discussed in 2022 during a “debate” on Russian values that denial of the value of family, and advocacy of a child free lifestyle and the popularisation of non-traditional sexual relations, were as dangerous for Russia as extremism, drugs and crime. (The “Australian” 21/7/22). No mention of power there. How things have changed!

Lent has always prompted thoughts around Jesus’ last week--- Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, etc. There was a time when I could attend ceremonies at especially Anglican or Catholic churches where the focus was on the Passion of Christ, perhaps more so than I had been used to in my Methodist upbringing. In that week there was no place for power!

Jesus time and again is clear about his destination.

That’s what Peter had trouble grasping. You would think after three years with Jesus he would have known better. But the desire to have it our way lingers long in us. So it did with Peter. Deep down he still wanted that King David style of saviour – sword in hand, stallion beneath, riding down the Roman soldiers, leading the army, taking control. Power aplenty!

The sad thing about the human story – and maybe the church’s story, is that the temptation to use power, even God’s, has always been strong, even irresistible.

Paul’s message to the church in Philippi is that Jesus did not grasp the power he had access to but remained committed to the ministry of giving and serving (V. 8). Power is an easier way to go – we can pursue power and long for influence. Power gets things done, authority is addictive (I’ve been there), but the cross has the opposite message.

Jesus had been clear about his chosen way. It was NOT to be the currency of power or greed. Remember his response in the temple (John 2:13—22). He chose the way of the servant, the currency of humility. Poor Peter seemed unable to grasp that concept. I wonder if we would have been any different?

When confronted with the choice between power and love Jesus did not convert stones into bread, jump from tall buildings, or chase after the wealth and power of this world, but gave himself to the hard task of love.

In God’s kingdom, power and greatness are not virtues. Being the servant of others is. Power is not the currency. Humility is.

Henri Nouwen writes in his Messianic essay about two rabbis discussing the coming Messiah. Rabbi one asks the question: “When WILL the messiah come?” Rabbi two says “He is already here ! - he’s sitting outside the city with others, attending to their wounds.” Rabbi one: “How will I know him then?” Rabbi two: “Look for the one binding wounds one at a time, saying, “I must be ready to help others, then I will bind my own wounds, I must be ready to respond.”

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The currency of care. The call of the servant..... It's not an easy call as the challenge to us echoes "Take up your cross and follow me". What is our cross? What part of our nice, comfy, life needs to be denied?

Easter is a reminder to us all that for all the temptations and allure of power, it is a powerless Jesus, committed to the hard task of love, that we follow and serve.

HYMN: MHB 256 Henry Burton 1840-1930

1. There's a light upon the mountains, and the day is at the spring
When our eyes shall see the beauty and the glory of the King;
Weary was our heart with waiting, and the night-watch seemed so long,
But his triumph day is breaking, and we hail it with a song.
2. There's a hush of expectation, and a quiet in the air,
And the breath of God is moving in the fervent breath of prayer:
For the suffering, dying Jesus is the Christ upon the throne,
And the travail of our spirit is the travail of his own.
3. He is breaking down the barriers, he is casting up the way,
He is calling for his angels to build up the gates of day:
But his angels here are human, not the shining hosts above;
For the drum-beats of his army are the heart-beats of our love.
4. Hark! We hear a distant music, and it comes with fuller swell-
'Tis the triumph song of Jesus, of our King Emmanuel:
Zion, go you forth to meet him: and my soul, be swift to bring
All your finest and your dearest for the triumph of our King!

Its nice to be reminded that in all this we are strengthened, and given the endurance needed. Psalm 29:11 "The Lord will give strength unto his people: The Lord will bless his people with peace".

And Romans 5:6 "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly".

PRAYER:

Father God,

As we conclude our time together, bless us as we go, and walk with us in the week ahead, when things like power and greed will again enter our life experience, join us and give us your Spirit that we so desperately need.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Amen

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