

“Where Goes The Church”

PENTECOST Acts 1: 4-11, 2:22-47

PRAYER:

Lord God, watch over us as we meet, and join us with your Spirit of understanding. Father, open our minds to your word, and to the call of your son Jesus, whose life and death speak to us, and whose offer of redemption awakens all to your desire to welcome us into your kingdom.

Be with us now we pray, Amen

HYMN (MHB 34) *by Walter Chalmers Smith, 1824-1908*

1. Immortal, Invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the ancient of days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.
2. Unresting, unhasting, and silent as night
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love
3. To all life thou givest – to both great and small
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree
And wither and perish – but nought changeth Thee.
4. Great Father of Glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight,
All laud we would render; O help us to see;
'Tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee.
5. Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, They great name we praise.
Amen.

BIBLE READING :

Acts1: 4—11

On one occasion, while he was eating with them he gave them this command: Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father has promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit. Then they gathered around him and asked him, Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?

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He said to them “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you: and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

Lord, we pray now for the Church, the UCA, and all places where your Son’s name is lifted up. May there be a resurgence of faith in this land. Father, your people long for an outpouring of the Spirit. We hope to see the name of Jesus become known and proclaimed throughout the world, may we be equipped for that task Lord, and strengthened to undertake it.

Amen

Message Pt1

Recently we were driving around the area of our childhood—that’s Birkenhead (for me) and Ethelton (for Lin). The drive took us past the Birkenhead Methodist Church building in Gunn street, and to our surprise it had been transformed into a very classy residence, and was on the market. We went back on the Saturday when it was open inspection – amazing transformation all through. It’s a two story, very classy residence, and in the upper level you can still see the ornate timber beams of the old church. A few shudders were experienced as we remembered the old Sunday school songs at anniversary times when we could almost touch the same rafters from the platform. Asking price \$930,000!!!

It was a rather small building (1926) compared to the “cathedral” church at Semaphore, but we were raised around that building. Sunday School, Christian Endeavour, Church etc. It was the social and spiritual centre of our world and we loved it.

Sad not to see it as a worship place today, but we both agreed better to see it not destroyed. A family home is not a bad outcome.

So what’s in a building? Therein lies the abiding question, as that defines its purpose. As the old church progressed from Bible Christian, Primitive Methodist, to Methodist, so did changes occur inside. Early days it was very plain, only a painted scroll-style sign above the pulpit “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness”. Later there was a cross (my addition). The old building was a very pleasant reminder of my coming to faith.

Song:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace*

His word shall not fail you- he promised, believe him and all will be well
Then go to a world that is dying His perfect salvation to tell.

Message Pt 2

“I don’t go to church, but I am a Christian” – how often have you heard that said? What does our Lord say about that?

“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read” (Luke 4:16). Here its clear that Jesus was a regular at worship, and its worth noting that he did not always find things in order there, but apparently worship was high on his list of life priorities, even though things needed to change in the synagogue, and in the lives of its leaders.

We read in Acts 4:1-11 that the early church numbered about 120, and Luke makes it clear they should stay put until they were equipped by the Holy Spirit. (Matt 28:19) “Go” (Acts 1:8), but not yet. Only then will it be time to leave the comfort of their known worship place (the Jerusalem temple/home church). The Holy Spirit would be their resting place and travelling companion —quite a challenge. For us too don’t you think? Taking our faith to the community is quite a challenge. When the minister at Birkenhead, Rev Edgar Miller, challenged me in 1962 to be a local preacher it was a scary proposition. It meant going to places (there were 6 worship places in our parish) other than my Birkenhead church roots. Yes we were very fond of that building, but it seemed God had other ideas.

Paul writes to the early church in Corinth (2 Corinthians 4: 7-10) “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed: perplexed, but not in despair: persecuted, but not abandoned: struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.”

So when we think maybe we are at the end of our rope, we are never at the end of our hope in Jesus. WE are pots of (fragile) clay, but the content of our lives is not perishable, nor does it have a use by date. That is what we take with us; the buildings are left behind. We are to go with the Spirit to proclaim the living truth in Christ.

The remnant people of the Birkenhead church went to the Semaphore building which is still in use and joined that congregation. Lin and I were married there in 1968.

In Luke 20, some Sadducees try to trap Jesus. His answer concluded with “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive”, and in a rare response from them: “ ‘Well said, teacher!’ and no one dared to ask him any more questions”. May it be so for us in our answer to his call, for there goes the Church, “for each of us will appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5: 10).

The church goes where it is needed, where Jesus calls, where others cannot, and it carries with it the Spirit of the risen Christ.

Acts 2:32-38 “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven and yet he said ‘The Lord said to my Lord. Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for

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your feet.’ Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles “Brothers what shall I do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Do you identify with this Peter of Acts 2? Contrast him now with the cringing, fearful disciple of Luke 22, and note how he speaks forthrightly to the gathered people, and calls out those who betrayed Jesus. His advice is clear: “repent and be baptised”.

With the anointing by the Holy Spirit they are told to prepare to go out beyond Jerusalem – “to the ends of the earth”. Furthermore, they are told not to speculate on the time of Jesus’ return. Their business is to get on with mission!

HYMN *(MHB 115 MHB) by Benjamin Rhodes 1743—1815 .*

1. My heart and voice I raise to spread the Messiahs praise; Messiah’s praise let all repeat;
The universal Lord by whose almighty word creation rose in form complete.
2. A servant’s form he wore, and in his body bore our dreadful curse on Calvary;
He like a victim stood and poured His sacred blood to set the guilty captive free.
3. But soon the Victor rose triumphant o’er His foes and led the vanquished host in chains;
He threw their empire down, His foes compelled to own o’er all the great Messiah reigns.
4. With mercy’s mildest grace He governs all our race in wisdom, righteousness and love;
Who to Messiah fly shall find redemption nigh and all His great salvation prove.
5. Hail, Saviour, Prince of Peace! Thy Kingdom shall increase till all the world Thy glory see,
And righteousness abound as the great deep profound and fill the earth with purity.

PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD: Barnabas focus on Iranian Christians:

Father our thoughts turn to the struggle of Iranian follower of Jesus, Mina Khajavi, sentenced to 6 years for promoting “Zionist Christianity”. Her health is suffering, and she is alone in an Islamic prison culture. Uphold in your keeping her and the other Christians held across Iran for similar offences, or for dress code offences. In Jesus’ name we pray.

Father we also thank you for the good news that many brick kiln workers are now free and families can live and have a future as Christians in Pakistan.

Amen

Blessing

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen

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