

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

9 Doonmore Street, Penrith NSW 2750

www.penrithpresbyterian.com



ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER 8/5/2024

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How are you today? I am thankful for the Combined Service and Church Family Picnic on Sunday, What a great day and expression of unity in Christ! What a tasty lunch by the PWA too!

Today we look at the "Superior Message of Christ" from Hebrews 2:1-4 before moving on to church matters.

ENCOURAGEMENT: The Superior Message of Christ (Hebrews 2:1-4)

A man has been trapped by rising flood waters. He sees one of his neighbours drift passed in a boat. "Get in before you drown," they yell.

"No," he says. "I'm praying for the Lord to rescue me."

The waters rise higher and he sits on his roof. A rescue boat speeds up to him and calls out, "Quick, jump in the boat or you'll drown."

"No," he says. "I'm praying for the Lord to rescue me."

Finally, he is standing on the highest point of the roof and a helicopter flies in and hovers above him, and they lower a man to hoist him up – "Hold on to me and we'll pull you out."

"No," he says. "I'm praying for the Lord to rescue me."

The flood waters rise over his house and he is swept away and drowns. He appears before God in heaven and says, "Why didn't you rescue me?"

God says, "I sent two boats and a helicopter, but you said no to each one."

The passage in Hebrews today warns us not to ignore our salvation.

We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Hebrews 2:1-4

The whole of chapter 1 shows how Jesus is superior to the angels. He is God himself become one of us, to be the sacrifice for our sins. This is not something to ignore, quite the opposite. We are to pay "the most careful attention" to the message of Jesus. This is not a cursory glance, a brief passage of Scripture here and there. No this is the message of our salvation. We cling to it like a drowning man might cling to a life rope so he is not swept away. We moor our life to it, so we might not drift away on the currents of this world.

The author says the message spoken through angels is binding. This message is the message of the Old Testament, particularly the Torah. Think of when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush in Exodus 3. It is the angel of the Lord who is present in the flames of fire. God's message is mediated to Moses through the angel of the Lord. But now we have something greater – the salvation spoken and gained by the Son. The message that is now spoken by those who were witness to Christ and by those who trust in Jesus and are saved by him. This message has been confirmed by the work of God in his people and among his people. This is not a message to be ignored.

Because Jesus is superior to the angels, his message is also superior. We are to take this seriously. Our Bibles should not be left to gather dust. We should not read the Bible and forget what it says, but linger on it throughout the day. We should not listen to the truth and do nothing about it. Hold on to the message of salvation in Christ like a drowning man clings to an immovable rock. Examine the message of salvation so your faith might grow. It is this message that presents God's grace and mercy and love to us in Christ. It is what we need and without it we face damnation forever. Are you clinging to God's message of salvation in Christ?

CHALLENGES

The challenges from each of the sermons of the last few weeks are as follows:

Psalm 120-121: Memorise Psalm 121

Psalm 122 & 125: Write what God has given to you personally in Christ. In Christ, I am... (Fill one page – Use Ephesians 1 or Romans 8 as a starting point).

Psalm 123-124: Write a prayer relevant to the circumstances of your life that is directed and inspired by Psalm 123 and/or Psalm 124

Psalm 126: Write a page of all the things that you are thankful for.

Psalm 127-128: Begin (or continue) reading the Bible together in your homes each day (eg. The gospel of Mark). You could ask the following questions:

- what do we learn about God?
- what do we learn about humanity?
- what do we learn about Jesus?
- how do we live in light of this passage?

Psalm 129: Write your worries and suffering in this world upon a piece of paper. Then lay the paper out before the Lord and commit it into his hands. Share them with another and pray together.

Psalm 130: Give Creative expression to Psalm 130 or another Psalm. For example:

- Draw a picture
- Compose a song
- Write a poem
- Take a photo
- Build a sculpture

Psalm 131: Find a quiet place in the Creation. Sit with your Bible. Consider Christ, still your heart, and enjoy him.

Psalm 132: EITHER fill a page listing all the characteristics of God you remember from the Bible AND/OR fill a page with all the names of Jesus you can remember from the Bible

Psalm 133-134: Find time to praise God and worship him for who he is. You can do this in a few ways:

- Sing to God some Christian songs (hymn book, CDs, Youtube/Spotify)
- Write your own Psalm of praise
- Praise God out loud

I would love to hear from people who have been putting these challenges into practice.

CONTACT

For the latest CONTACT you can download it here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/hj3v1nvovs8x9wo5nq3xv/APRIL-CONTACT-2024-email-copy.pdf?rlkey=1s7i53s9fgctfu50xrveufkxc&dl=0>

ENGAGING WITH GOD #3: PRAYER

Come and join a conversation about how we engage with God.

In this second session, we will consider prayer and its role in how we love God and grow in his love for us in Christ.

We will ask:

- What does the Bible teach about how prayer helps us in our relationship with God?
- How can I learn to pray effectively?
- What does the Bible teach about how I should pray.

We will meet at church tonight Wednesday May 15th at 7.00pm.

NEXT KHC MEETING

The next leaders and helpers meeting for Kids Holiday Club is Wednesday May 29th (NOT tonight, 8/5!) We also need shirt sizes for those attending. Please send them to Nicole.

GUESS WHO IS COMING TO DINNER?

We are having a “Guess Who is Coming to Dinner” night on Saturday May 25th. Put on the list in the foyer whether you would like to be a guest or a host. If you are guest you will be given an address to attend. If you are a host, you will be given the number of guests attending and any dietary requirements. Who are you have dinner with? You will not find out until that evening.

EQUALITY BILL

Independent MP for Sydney, Alex Greenwich, is pushing the *Equality Legislation Amendment Bill 2023*, which makes 80+ amendments across 20+ NSW laws. It seeks to decriminalise commercial surrogacy, remove parental consent from a children’s decision to access medical interventions, to nullify existing protections for faith-based schools, churches and healthcare providers to maintain religious ethos and character, remove prohibitions around the solicitation of public acts of sex in front of churches, schools and hospitals, institute sex self-ID meaning a person can self-designate their sex on their birth certificate permitting biological males to access women only spaces, sports and groups.

If you want to take action you can follow this link: <https://www.acl.org.au/nsw-equality/>

COMMUNITY PANTRY

if you would like to donate to the pantry this week, we are in need of:

- toilet paper

- tissues
- jam
- peanut butter
- hand wash
- floor cleaner
- general purpose cleaning spray
- laundry liquid
- rice
- coffee
- dog food

GOSPEL, SOCIETY AND CULTURE NAVIGATE CONFERENCE 2024

The Gospel, Society and Culture committee's Navigate Conference is on *Faithful Discipleship in a Sexualised Culture* and has speakers Melinda Tankard-Riest (author, educator and media commentator addressing sexualisation and objectification), Stephen White (Presbyterian minister in Young) and Marshall Ballantine-Jones (Anglican Minister with a PhD addressing the effect of pornography on adolescents). It also has a number of practical workshops.

It is on Friday May 31st from 8.45am to 4pm at Christ College and online. Follow this link for more information and to book: <https://gsandc.org.au/navigate-2024-join-us/>

STATE OF ORIGIN NIGHT

You are invited to watch the NRL State of Origin Game 1 on Wednesday 5th June from 7pm till 10pm at Church on the Big Screen. Bring along your own snacks and NON-alcoholic drinks to enjoy watching the match. Please indicate on the sign-up sheet at back of Church by no later than Sunday 2nd June.

FINAL COMMENTS

Our next sermon series begins at Luke 9:51 and again find ourselves on the road to Jerusalem, not with the Psalms on a pilgrimage but with Jesus as he disciples us heading towards the cross.

*The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way,
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.*

J.R.R.Tolkien "The Lord of the Rings"

As always, love and prayers,
Steve