

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

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Encouragement Letter (4DEC24)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How are you today? I am thankful for Christmas time and reflecting upon the incarnation – how God became one of us in Christ.

A reminder, please complete the Congregation Snapshot at <https://forms.gle/L5qbATyXHJtP88377> The session value you input and it will us to lead the congregation well.

Today, Ben Pratt is doing the encouragement on: “Come let us adore him – making the way”, Ben will be writing the encouragement throughout December. After the encouragement we will move on to church matters.

ENCOURAGEMENT: Come let us adore him – making the way (by Ben Pratt)

This month Steve has graciously given me the opportunity to share some words of encouragement with our church, and with this being December, it felt right to explore different aspects of the encouragement to “Come let us adore him”, as that famous Christmas Carol declares.

How do you feel about your part in the work of God in this world? It can be easy to look at those who have leadership roles in the church and those who serve up the front of our ministries and Sunday services, and see them as being more important than we are, that those Christians are doing God's work, and that the rest of us should just be filling the pews and trying to live good, Godly lives in peace with those around us.

God doesn't work that way though, for his plans require all of his people, for all of his people are important in accomplishing his work and his will.

I'm sure it didn't seem that way to Zechariah and Elizabeth, for they were old. Surely their job was just to help out with their community, obey God's laws, and serve as needed, right?
God had other plans.

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Luke

1:11-17

God’s plans for them apparently included a child in their old age, and not just any child, but one who would lead many of the people of Israel back to God, preparing the way for Jesus. A child who would go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, no less!

As we move towards Christmas and we celebrate the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is all too easy for us to look to what Jesus did (and does even now) for us, and to think that everything’s been done for us, and that all that is left for us is to adore Jesus, to praise him, and to glorify his name.

Because, yes, Jesus *did* do everything for us, in making things right between God and humanity through his atoning death and sacrifice, but that in no way removes the good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do... **good works that not just glorify God and help us to grow in knowledge and maturity, but good works that also prepare the way for others to “come and see the Lord”**, just as Zechariah and Elizabeth were to do through having and raising the one we know as John the Baptist.

Or, as Ephesians 2:10 tells us;

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Who is in your life, from the most casual engagement, to the deepest relationship, that you can in some way impact to help them to “come and see the Lord”?

Reflect on that question, pray, and see what opportunities God puts before you this month as we approach Christmas and celebrate the birth of Jesus, because I have no doubt that there are many in your life who God would love to welcome into his kingdom.

As always, love and prayers,
Steve