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**Sunday 8 January 2023 to Sunday 15 January 2023**

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Sunday 8 January 2023

# Listening to the Lord

by Pastor Tim Klein

**And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased’ (Matthew 3:17).**

Read Matthew 3:13–17

Over this week, we will hear a decent dollop of law and judgement as the Lord speaks out against his enemies and calls out his people.

However, among it all, there is hope. There are promises and assurances that despite how people behave, the Lord still wants them all – us all – to be saved. Some of it may resonate with your circumstances; some might not sit so well.

We start the week with this short but wonderful announcement from the Lord concerning Jesus: ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’

It may be interesting to note the exchange between John and Jesus before Jesus’ baptism occurred. It often happens this way. We have our expectations of how God should act, what he should do and how he should be. And so, John confronts Jesus with his idea of how things should go. John would have prevented him, saying in verse 14, ‘I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?’.

But Jesus gently reminds him of who he is in relationship to John by effectively saying, ‘this is how it has to be’ … Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness’.

And so, Jesus is baptised and then revealed to all the world as the Son of God! God has great plans, and they are all being fulfilled in Jesus. If you are a baptised child of God, then some of these plans are being fulfilled in you – and that’s how it’s meant to be!

Perhaps take some time to reflect and pray on what you have experienced of the Lord’s purposes in your life.

‘Come, Lord Jesus, come; into this weary and tangled world. O, how we long for you to come, Lord, come!’

**Dear Father, we thank you for revealing who Jesus is in all his fullness as your dearly loved Son. We know all he has done for us, and so we look forward with confidence to life with you into eternity. Amen.**

Tim is the husband of the lovely Joylene, father of three and their spouses, and Pa to nine grandchildren. Tim loves family time. He also loves family time with his faith family at Faith Warradale, where he has served as the pastor for eight years. He has served as a pastor of the church in various capacities for more than 30 years. Tim also enjoys photography, pushbike riding and gardening and is a self-taught guitarist, Adelaide Conservatorium-trained singer, and writer of an occasional song. Tim says he looks forward to a couple more years as a full-time pastor and is open to where the Lord would use him beyond that.

Monday 9 January 2023

# Idolatry and the one true God

by Pastor Tim Klein

**I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save (Isaiah 46:4b).**

Read Isaiah 46:1–13

Today is about idolatry: comparing idols with the one true God.

Bel (alternatively known as Baal) and Nebo are the supreme idols of Babylon in the time of Isaiah. Here, ahead of the Persian invasion and the fall of Babylon, Isaiah denounces them as useless for saving anyone. Instead, they are rescued, loaded onto wagons, a burden on the people, and carried away to safety.

In contrast, the Lord speaks to his people. Listen up! You are no burden to me, and I am no burden to you. You don’t have to carry me around in a cart – you don’t have to rescue me! The opposite is the truth: ‘I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save’.

God’s people are a stubborn bunch and easily swayed. How frustrating for the Lord when his chosen people, the ones he loved and set apart as his own, continually chased after other idols. They even knew they were chasing empty promises and hope – useless lumps of metal and other idols that could do nothing for them.

It must be frustrating for our God when we chase after idols with no lasting value or worth. They may offer but finally cannot deliver. God observes us as he observed those Israelites in Babylonia with their Babylonian idols: They lift it to their shoulders, carry it, set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move from its place. If one cries out to it, it does not answer or save anyone from trouble.

Instead, he invites us – as he invited them – to remember: you ‘who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am he, even when you turn grey I will carry you’.

‘Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no-one like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, “My purpose shall stand, and I will fulfil my intention”’ (Isaiah 46:9,10).

Take time to reflect on our modern-day idols and ask yourself, ‘What use are they?’ Then think about all the Lord our God has done and promises to do for you through Jesus.

**Our Heavenly Father, you are God, and no-one is like you. You declare the end from the beginning and from ancient times, the things not yet done. You say, ‘My purpose shall stand, and I will fulfil my intention’! Open our hearts and minds to recognise what you have done, are doing, and have promised to do. We ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.**

Tuesday 10 January 2023

# Redeemed by the mercy of God

by Pastor Tim Klein

**Our Redeemer – the Lord of hosts is his name – is the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 47:4).**

Read Isaiah 47:1–15

Yesterday’s devotion focused on the futility of idolatry. The Lord, speaking through Isaiah, tells us that idols cannot save us. They may offer some comfort at the thought of what they might promise, but they finally come to nothing.

Today the Lord turns Isaiah toward Babylon and Chaldea – ‘virgin daughter Babylon … daughter Chaldea’ (verse 1). The Lord punished his own rebellious nation by allowing them to be taken over by Babylonia. Many people were taken captive to Babylon itself. Seemingly the Lord’s idea of punishment under Babylonian and Chaldean leaders was exceeded. ‘I was angry with my people, I profaned my heritage; I gave them into your hand, you showed them no mercy’ (verse 6).

So now the Lord promises to punish the Babylonians and Chaldeans: ‘I will take vengeance, and I will spare no-one’ (verse 3).

This shows us something of God’s sense of justice. Even in punishing his people by allowing them to be taken captive, he still expected the Babylonians to be merciful toward them. As a result of their lack of mercy, God’s justice shows them no mercy! Ouch.

It reminds me a little of the story about the servant who was forgiven a large debt by his master only to go straight out and throw someone who owed him relatively little into prison and effectively toss the key away. It did not end well for that servant.

We need to understand that about God. Yes, God is love; yes, he is merciful and slow to anger; and yes, he might even allow us to be punished through the circumstances of our lives, but he is also just. Like it or not, this is our God. He observed the Babylonians acting as though they were God in their wickedness, saying twice: ‘I am, and there is no-one besides me’ (verses 8 and 10).

Yet the Lord remains a redeemer – our Redeemer. He is holy, and there is none like him. No idols, sorceries or enchantments can do what he does. He redeems lost and fallen people: ‘Our Redeemer – the Lord of hosts is his name – is the Holy One of Israel’ (verse 4).

The Lord Jesus is our Redeemer who continues to seek us out in our lost places and do for us what no idol or nation can do: redeem us and bring us safely home.

**Jesus – our Redeemer, God’s own Son, precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One – thank you, O my Father, for giving us your Son and leaving your Spirit until the work on earth is done. Amen.**

Wednesday 11 January 2023

# Mercy for stiff-necked people

by Pastor Tim Klein

**For I knew how stubborn you were; your neck muscles were iron, your forehead was bronze (Isaiah 48:4).**

Read Isaiah 48:1–11

This word today, Isaiah 48:1–11, takes a bit to digest and unpack – but it is worth the effort. Today, the Lord focuses Isaiah on the hypocrisy and stubbornness of his people.

It seems to be an age-old problem that is still with us today and was alive and well in captive Israel.

They claimed they were God’s people – claimed citizenship in the holy city – and claimed to rely on the God of Israel, but they also ignored the mighty works of their God, even ascribing them to their own efforts or idols. They were rigidly stubborn about it – to the point of inflexibility in their thinking and actions. That’s how they were described by Isaiah: ‘For I knew how stubborn you were; your neck muscles were iron, your forehead was bronze’ (Isaiah 48:4).

Does that sound familiar? Is this problem still ours in any way today? Are you and I tempted to ascribe our successes and blessings to our own efforts, luck or good fortune, and even to some of our common idols? God observed his people and their treachery as they claimed his things for their own. What does he see in our lives, homes, churches and worship?

But even then, the Lord did not destroy them – even now, the Lord does not destroy us.

He relents. He has mercy. He does new things that bless us – undeserving as we are. ‘For my own name’s sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to destroy you completely’ (Isaiah 48:9).

Yes, we sin too. We can be stubborn and even treacherous, but our Lord Jesus has love and mercy that constantly reaches out to us with forgiveness. We, too, can rightly claim our place in the Holy City through our participation in the body of Christ. All glory to him and no other.

**All glory, praise and honour to you, redeemer, king, to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring. You are the king of Israel and David's royal son, now in the Lord's name coming the king and blessed one. (Theodulph of Orleans, 821 AD, TIS 333)**

Thursday 12 January 2023

# No rest for the wicked

by Pastor Tim Klein

**‘There is no peace’, says the Lord, ‘for the wicked’ (Isaiah 48:22).**

Read Isaiah 48:12–22

I am sure you are familiar with the phrase, ‘no rest of the wicked’. The Bible is where it comes from. But who are ‘the wicked’, and what does this mean?

The Lord begins this section of Isaiah 48 with a call to his people: listen to me!

The implication is that they are not listening to the voice of the Lord but to others. So, the Lord reminds them who is speaking: ‘I am he; I am the first, and I am the last. My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they stand at attention’ (Isaiah 48:12,13).

It’s a bit like families when the kids aren’t listening. Most parents have that experience. And what do we do when our kids do not listen? Sometimes we remind them of who we are. We are asserting our role in the relationship. ‘I’m your mum or dad; I’m the one who feeds you and clothes you. I’m the one who provides you with all you need and then some. You need to listen to me for your own sake. It’s good for you to listen to me!’

God’s people need to listen to him: ‘I am the Lord your God, who teaches you for your own good, who leads you in the way you should go’ (Isaiah 48:17).

There is peace and rest for those who believe, listen, and obey. Jesus – Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6b) – gives us that peace.

Who are the wicked? Those who do not listen – and do not follow the word of the Lord.

What does it mean by they will have no peace? They will be lost from the kingdom. There will be no rest for them, and they will be cast out into the outer darkness.

But for those who place their faith and trust in the Lord and listen to him, there is mercy, life and eternal life in his kingdom.

**Jesus, my Redeemer, name above all names, precious Lamb of God, Messiah, O for sinners slain. Thank you, O my Father, for giving us your Son and leaving your Spirit till the work on earth is done. (Melody Green © 1982 Birdwing Music; Admin by SHOUT! Music Publishing Australia)**

Friday 13 January 2023

# Light to the nations

by Pastor Tim Klein

**I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth (Isaiah 49:6b).**

Read Isaiah 49:1–12

This verse sits in the middle of a 12-verse poem. The poem is understood to be number two in a series of four poems set in Isaiah known as the servant songs – written about a certain servant of the Lord!

In the centre of the poem is a huge statement: ‘My servant will be a light to the nations. His purpose will be to bring salvation to everyone!’

The world of Isaiah’s time was a dark place. Nothing has changed. We are constantly bombarded by darkness – the presence of the evil one, all the consequences of sin, and our own faults and failures.

And while we may be tempted by the many small and worldly lights that sometimes attract us (like moths to flames), they cannot fully lighten up our lives.

We need this light of salvation to thrive – now and eternally. This is a light of hope that warms our hearts, guides us and shines away the darkness of our fears.

I recently purchased an order of plants online. Half died in transit due to spending too much time in darkness. They needed light – just like we need light.

The Lord sends this light as a servant into the world.

Jesus is that light. Jesus is the light of the world; he is the light to the nations, the saving light to the ends of the earth.

**Light of the nations, sight of the blinded, you are our freedom from every dark prison. Shine your light on the world; shine your light on the world. (© Robin Mann, AT 389)**

Saturday 14 January 2023

# Confident patience

by Pastor Tim Klein

**I patiently waited, Lord, for you to hear my prayer (Psalm 40:1).**

Read Psalm 40

Here at the end of another week, seven days of life with all its up and down experiences, and here as a new week waits for us with all its events, planned and unknown, we can rest with confidence and patience in the Lord.

Do you hear the boldness and confidence of the young King David here? During his early years, he faced all sorts of challenges and dangers as his reign was established.

While David was certainly a man of action, he was, nevertheless, a man of patience. Even as he waited on the Lord, he was able to look back, see and remember the amazing things that the Lord had done. He tells us how the Lord rescued him from that lonely muddy, miry pit and raised him up onto a firm foundation.

He also looked ahead with confidence and patience – for the promises of the Lord to unfold. Ready to be obedient to the Lord: ‘I am here to do what is written about me in the book, where it says, “I enjoy pleasing you. Your law is in my heart”’ (Psalm 40:7,8).

Let us allow the Lord to use David and his life – his confident and patient faith – to encourage us in our lives. We might not have the same level of authority or influence, but we, too, are created by God with purpose. We all need to pray with such confidence and patience in the Lord.

He has plans for your life and mine. He will journey with us, never leaving or forsaking us. We can pray and live with full confidence in the Lord. Lord, into your hands, I commit myself, my life, and all that I am.

**Lord of our days, Lord of yesterday,Lord, our Lord, forever, your people we are.Lord of our days, Lord of yesterday,Lord, our Lord, forever, your people we are.**

**From many pasts you fashion one history,a people of God created to holdfor all [humankind] the myst'ry of faith.Lord of our days, your people we are.(© 1976 Neil Quintrell)**

Sunday 15 January 2023

# How many followers have you got?

by Sal Huckel

**Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ... A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me (John 1:29,30).**

Read John 1:29–42

John describes himself as preparing the way of the Lord. We are familiar with his and Jesus’ story as cousins, their mothers’ friendships and the special way John was chosen for this role as a prophet. In this fascinating passage, we see John pointing Jesus out to his own disciples, declaring Jesus as greater than himself, and ‘losing’ followers to Jesus on the same walk.

John knew his job here was not to have his own followers – he was here to gather followers together, ready for Jesus.

Have we recalibrated our thinking to ponder how counter-cultural this is?

‘Having a following’ is language we are accustomed to in today’s society, especially in the online world. It’s important to people in many contexts, even with Christian influencers, personalities and churches. Perhaps popularity and numbers are in danger of becoming more important than the gospel message or the one true God we are supposed to be following.

Take some time to consider any situations in which you’ve placed ‘your following’ or your church numbers over the gospel message we are here for. Are there any counter-cultural (and difficult) decisions that need to be made to get back to your calling?

**Lord, thank you for the reminder of John’s humility and his example in pointing to you and away from himself. Help us remember this in the decisions we make, the influences we try to have and the work we do, even in your name. May we walk more humbly, pointing to you, even at the cost of our own popularity or church numbers. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

Sal is married to Pastor Matthew Huckel, and they have six wonderful children – now an entire worship band as they serve together in ministry. Sal wears many other hats: she loves writing, speaking, and working as a wellness coach for Weight Watchers.