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**Sunday 21 June to Sunday 28 June**

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Sunday 21 June

# Who sees?

by Sal Huckel

**'Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters' (Colossians 3:23).**

Read Colossians 3:18–25

In everyday life we benefit from so much work that goes on behind the scenes or is hidden in plain sight. We sit down to a clean table in a food hall. We can be sure that our supermarket's shelves are being restocked while we sleep. Sometimes we are able to thank and bless the people who do these things for us, but most of the time their jobs are thankless and their work is hidden.

During these times of isolation and disruption, perhaps the tables have been turned. The cleaners and the shelf-stockers staﬀ are in full view – and valued diﬀerently. At the same time, some people who are normally at the forefront have been forced to work from home – still doing their job but having no idea whatsoever whether their work is being received favourably or even if anyone is watching or listening. Some of us might be teachers preparing lessons for absent students, or members of children’s ministry teams sending out lessons, or pastors providing services online and, for some, in the printed word.

For some of us, even in ‘normal times’ the phone call might not be returned. The letter and gift go unacknowledged. The hoped-for job application is neither accepted nor rejected.

Be encouraged. We have an audience of One, a God who sees all. Sometimes we may feel that no-one is noticing, appreciating or listening. Other times the Lord gives us an insight into the eﬀects our eﬀorts are having. We pursue our daily work and follow his leading with a heart of generosity and blessing anyway. We are working for the Lord.

We can also ask him to open our eyes to acknowledging the work of others, which we might otherwise overlook.

***Lord, help us to give our whole eﬀort to work that is seen, and unseen. Help us to be aware that it is you we are serving, as we do our work, as we read the email, clean the table, organise our task list. Open our eyes to the work we sometimes miss, and inspire us to encourage and thank others for their eﬀorts. We pray you will show us with grace where we fall short. In Jesus’ name, Amen.***

Monday 22 June 2020

# The joy of salvation

by Norma Koehne

**'Restore to me the joy of your salvation' (Psalm 51:10).**

Read Psalm 51

Right now, there are events in our world that are causing anxiety and even despair for many people. We are blessed to have had government leaders working together to mitigate some of these worries, but there are still many people who are struggling and have little joy in their lives.

The psalmist reminds us that amid tragedy and despair, we can still have joy – the joy of your salvation. What is this joy? First of all, it is God’s salvation (your salvation) that he has freely given to us through the vicarious death of his son. Most of us received this when we were helpless babies, when God through water and his word, made us his children and gave us all the precious gifts that this implies, freedom from sin, death and the devil, and freedom to live lives of loving service to our gracious Father.

Why does the psalmist say, ‘restore to me the joy of your salvation’? As we know, it is so easy to take the blessings of salvation for granted; we have had them all our lives. It is interesting to read about the joy of people in places like Papua New Guinea when they heard the good news of God’s love and salvation through faith in Christ. There was great joy, as they no longer had to fear the malevolent spirits of the dead, who filled their lives with uncertainty and misery.

In an affluent society, when all things are going well and we are at our ease, it is also easy to forget the joy of salvation. This was a problem in Israel as we read in the minor prophets ie Amos 6:1,4–7. However, things can change in an instant, as we have seen recently with the COVID-19 pandemic. Only one thing lasts for now and into eternity, and that is the faithfulness of God and the joy of his salvation, so freely given to us.

**God, restore to me the joy of your salvation, so that I may rejoice, whether I am going through good times or bad, because you hold me secure in your loving care. Amen.**

Tuesday 23 June 2020

# Is God enough?

by Pastor Kevin Bell

**'And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus’ (Philippians 4:19).**

Read Philippians 4:10–13

Is it really true that God is all we need, that God is enough for us?

What would the person say who has waited on God for years to heal them, and nothing changes? What about the parents who have watched helplessly year after year as their child makes self-destructive choices? Is God enough? What about this pandemic that is killing thousands and destroying livelihoods all over the world?

Is God enough? … when we are in the pain and agony or are struggling with our faith? When tragedy strikes? When God seems indifferent to our pain, and when our prayers seem to hit a brick wall?

Martin Luther wrote of his struggle with God over the illness of his friend Philip Melancthon: ‘This time I besought the Almighty with great vigour. I attacked Him with His own weapons, quoting from Scripture all the promises that I could remember, that prayers should be granted, and said that He must grant my prayer, if I was henceforth to put faith in His promises.’

Remember that God is bound by his promises. He won’t go back on what he has promised you, and he has given you more than enough promises to cling to: ‘Ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you’, ‘I will never leave you; I will never forsake you’, ‘My grace is sufficient’, ‘In all things God works for the good of those who love him’.

Take heart that God sees the big picture. He sees life from beginning to the end – ‘the whole thing’ – and invites us not to seek an answer that seems right to us, but to put our hope and trust in him, who sees all and knows all.

**Father, as we struggle with the pain and hurts of this life, as we wrestle with you over things that seem to be unfair, help us to hold on to the truth that you are all we need and your grace is more than enough for us. Help us to direct our hope toward you, not glued onto our needs, and to wait patiently and confidently until we are with you. Amen.**

Wednesday 24 June 2020

# Musings from a skate park

by Rachael Stelzer

**‘But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’ (1 Peter 2:9).**

Read 1 Peter 2:1–17

I went with my boys to the skate park on the weekend. I expected chaos, but I learned some lessons instead.

I watched kids giving each other a nod that said, 'Your turn', and waiting. They gauged the terrain and took a line to zip down and up a slope or a quarter pipe, watching for where others stood. My 11-year-old made friends with a 5-year-old and encouraged him in a new skill he was trying. At one stage, a kid complained to his dad, ‘I got snaked!’ I learnt that this meant someone had broken the unspoken rules of skate park etiquette and dropped in on him without checking carefully first.

I watched the 15- and 20-year-olds, and the stares of wonder from the younger kids as they defied gravity on their BMX bikes. I talked to a dad whose 9-year-old son is diagnosed with ADHD and medicated, but here in the skate park, he is a semi-pro with a YouTube channel and some sponsorship from local businesses. ‘This is the only thing that centres him’, said his dad.

It got me thinking. I hope our churches are like skate parks.

I hope we are in the business of encouraging people to try new skills, gifts and talents. I hope we are set up in such a way that people are kept safe. I hope we are building community, not just in institutional ways, but through genuine relationships and friendships. I hope we have respectful ways of working with those who cause injury to others or risk doing so. I hope we have ways of bringing our young people into contact with their wise elders, to be able to learn and wonder at their faith and their wisdom. And I hope that for those who deal with labels in their everyday world, we can offer freedom from these labels and recognise the soul within.

**Heavenly Father, as we start returning to our worshipping communities, we pray for opportunities to encourage and inspire each other once again. May our church communities welcome and build everyone up, from the young to the old. And may we hold Jesus high, as the one who defied death, and will drop in on us again soon. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

Thursday 25 June 2020

# Wise generosity (part 1)

by Kathy Matuschka

**‘If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles’ (Matthew 5:41).**

Read Matthew 5:38–42

I recently heard an exposition of this ‘turn the other cheek’ passage in Matthew 5 (thanks Rick Strelan). It suggested that turning the other cheek might actually be self-protective because turning your right cheek towards your opponent’s right hand ensures they cannot hit you as hard as if they were able to take a good swing at your left cheek.

What then might it mean to go a second mile after you have been forced to go the first? There are some stages in life in which any of us would lack the grace to submit to a demand like this with a generous spirit. And there are some situations where our most pressing work is to retrieve some of our own dignity and to shore up our own boundaries and self-care so that we are better positioned to continue to love others for the long term.

What does it mean, though, for our anxious world when as Christians we can joyfully over-deliver, even when we have been treated badly by others? I am not talking about being a doormat who does what others say because they do not recognise their value as a dearly loved child of God, as precious as the next person and equally worthy of honour. I am talking about wise generosity where you freely and willingly choose the long game as Jesus did (Philippians 2:5–8).

On so many levels I resist doing this. In earthly terms, it is simply not fair. The only hope I have of getting to this place of joyful obedience is by dying to myself every single day and rising with Christ a little more transformed and renewed.

It is a painfully slow process.

**Dear Jesus, as I consider the challenges faced by this world in general, and my neighbours in particular, I pray that you will fill me with your Spirit of wise generosity. Amen.**

Friday 26 June 2020

# Wise generosity (part 2)

by Kathy Matuschka

‘**Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God … for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else’ (2 Corinthians 9:13).**

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9–15

In the newspaper, I read projections of the financial impact of the coronavirus on the poorest people in the world, as many, many people move into a state of extreme poverty. Here I sit in Australia, one of the most fortunate of the fortunate ones – not personally affected even by drought, bushfire or loss of employment. How can I hope to make a dent in the horrific statistics? How can I practise wise generosity?

On the global scale, we can each play our part, and we have organisations like Australian Lutheran World Service which manage our contributions wisely. Sometimes on the local scale, it is trickier because we know the complexity of our neighbours’ situations. The voice of judgement can compete with the call of God’s Spirit, making us slower to open our hearts and our hands. Or sometimes we are just so busy that we do not slow down long enough to notice and respond to the needs around us.

We will not defeat poverty and injustice on this earth, but we participate in letting God’s kingdom come, and so we pray for wise, generous, obedient hearts. As we do ‘the next right thing’, this transforms us so that we are ready to do the following right thing. If you are like many other faithful Christians, the plan will only be clear as you look back.

**Dear loving God, may I live a life of such wise generosity that, although your plan for my life may appear fuzzy just now, the view looking back will be breathtaking! In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

Saturday 27 June 2020

# Wise generosity (part 3)

by Kathy Matuschka

**‘Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for … your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else’ (2 Corinthians 9:13).**

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9–15

I use the term ‘wise generosity’ to indicate acts of generosity that are not done with the expectation of receiving something in return, either from the recipient or from God. Nor are they done to assuage a sense of guilt. They are gestures made in the freedom of the knowledge that there is nothing we can do to make God love us any more or any less and that the outcome of our generosity is in God’s hands and not in our own.

Today, we consider another great need in this world: care and compassion. I'm a listener a lot of the time. Listening to people’s stories energises me. But, as an introvert and an empath, I can easily find myself overwhelmed with the suffering and emotional energy around me, and then I'm no good to anyone.

How does one practise wise generosity in a hurting, anxious world? Here are a few thoughts:

1. As today’s text indicates, we are empowered by the gospel of Christ.
2. We need to tap into that power every day, being renewed in our baptism.
3. This power enables us to die to ourselves and the demands of our egos that so easily override Jesus’ call to be gentle and humble of spirit (Matthew 11:29).
4. Spending time in God’s word and prayer enables us to develop the discipline of being attentive to where our Saviour is calling us.
5. Rest in God's arms, where we know ourselves as dearly loved children of God and worthy of our care and compassion as the next person.

**Dear loving God, in these anxious times, give me a spirit of wise generosity towards both myself and others. Thank you that there is always room for me in your embrace. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

Sunday 28 June

# Choose life

by Ruth Olsen

**'If you make the Lord your refuge, and if you make the Most High your shelter ...' (Psalm 91:9).**

Read Psalm 91:9–16

Do you remember hearing, in your childhood, a parent or teacher say to you, 'If you do … then …', followed by a warning or promise? Does it surprise you that our Abba Father sometimes says that also – that some things are conditional? He is looking for a response, asking whether you are going to ‘step up’ in exercising responsibility, taking initiative, making your choice, and trusting him.

The Lord has designed and created us to be in relationship, with him and with other people. That involves rights, responsibilities, privileges, and opportunities. And he desires that we choose life, not death (see Deuteronomy 30:11–20). Jesus has made this possible for us, having fulfilled God’s requirements for us (see Romans 10:1–13). In all these things, the Holy Spirit is our Helper who enables us to consider and then take God at his word, to trust Jesus who both reveals Abba Father to us and sends the Holy Spirit to work faith and empower us (see John 14:15–21,23–27).

Psalm 91:1 declares that those who live or dwell in the shelter of the Most High will find rest … That’s God’s promise to you. Here in verse nine, we are reminded that we have the option to choose. And that’s not just once – it's moment-by-moment.

***Lord, thank you that you are my refuge and shelter! Amen.***