****

**Sunday 12 June 2022 to Sunday 19 June 2022**

****

Sunday 12 June 2022

# You can handle the truth

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth (John 16:13a).**

Read John 16:12–15

In the movie, A Few Good Men, Jack Nicholson plays a passionate yet deceitful military officer, confronted by an upstart lawyer accusing him of the heinous crime of covering up the chain of command, which leads to murder. During the most iconic scene, Nicholson takes the stand, swears to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help him, God.

When posed with a yes or no answer as to whether he ordered the hazing of a marine, Nicholson gives an impassioned speech, criticising the lawyer and openly questioning those who don’t understand the military’s role. At the end of the monologue, his face full of fury, he iconically states: ‘You can’t handle the truth’.

There are many times in my life when I feel like that. When the next straw falls on top of the last one, our backs feel broken, and our spirits crushed, I wonder if I can handle the truthful statement that life really isn’t fair.

In our reading today, Jesus, about to be led to Golgotha, describes the unfairness of what will happen to him and the struggle the disciples will encounter afterwards. Knowing that his disciples could be overwhelmed by the entirety of the news of his death (and not listen to the good news following), he tells them, ‘I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear’.

In other words, I don’t have enough time to ease you into this and to be honest, you couldn’t handle the truth.

Thus, Jesus promises the Spirit of truth, the one who will guide them into all the promises that Jesus has for them. The Spirit of truth, the Advocate, the one who will speak to them and for them, will reveal that there is much more to this life than death and despair, pandemic and pestilence, inflation and unfairness.

There is the resurrection. And the hope. And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.

That is the truth they can handle.

**Heavenly Father, through your Spirit who listens to the Son, please guide me into all the truth of your promises and relieve me from the fears that press in so closely. Amen.**

Reid Matthias is the school pastor at St Andrews Lutheran College in Tallebudgera, Queensland. Reid is married to Christine, who is part of the Grow Ministries team. Together, they have raised three incredible daughters, Elsa, Josephine and Greta. Dedicated to the written word, Reid has recently published his fourth novel, Blank Spaces, maintains the blog ireid.blogspot.com and regularly contributes to The Lutheran magazine.

Monday 13 June 2022

# Impressing your kids

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**Impress [these commandments] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up (Deuteronomy 6:7).**

Read Deuteronomy 6:4–15

I don’t know if you’re like this, but sometimes I like to talk about the past, things I used to do when I was young, to impress kids about how ‘tough’ it was to live 40 years ago. You know, before the internet, mobile phones and remote-control TVs. (Remember getting up to twist the knob to change the channel?)

Frankly, the moment I start with, ‘When I was a kid …’ in that old codger-like voice, the kids have already tuned me out. They know what trouble and hardship are. They have to live with constant badgering online, persistent pressure to live up to hopeless expectations, and so many channels on TikTok (I’m pretty sure they don’t watch TV anymore). I’m positive that I'm the one who would struggle growing up today.

But you know what does pique their interest? When I talk about how faith and life intersect. When we walk along the road and discover how God is still leading the charge in the world. Describing stories of God’s faithfulness even when I am not or speaking of spiritual struggle in a darkening world is of utmost importance. Even when they don’t respond with ‘Gee, that’s so awesome!’, I can tell a spark has flickered in their world.

This is why God commands that the people of Israel follow and teach the ways of ‘the Lord your God as long as you live … so that you may enjoy long life’ (Deuteronomy 6:b).

Impressing our kids and giving them the knowledge and hope of enjoyably long life together is the joyful command of the Lord our God.

As you walk your journey this week, as you sit at home or travel to work, and as you lie down and get up, impress the kids in your sphere of influence.

The Lord is our God. The Lord alone. And that’s enough.

**Help us to hear you, Lord, our God. When life seems difficult, remind us of your saving grace and help us repeat these amazing words to our children. Amen.**

Tuesday 14 June 2022

# Senseless and foolish

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**Among all the wise leaders of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is no-one like you. They are all senseless and foolish (Jeremiah 10:7b,8a).**

Read Jeremiah 10:6–16

It’s interesting to watch how elections take place. For weeks (or months) preceding the actual voting, the country is subjected to a tsunami of advertising telling us whom to vote for. The fascinating part is this: each party attempts to describe how senseless and foolish the others are.

To be fair, this happens everywhere in the world. We debate by tearing down rather than dialoguing, and we campaign by destroying character rather than leading by serving.

Politicians have a difficult calling. They are tasked to lead a diverse mob of people with extraordinarily different priorities to a particular indistinct future. But if we’ve learned anything about the contemporary world of politics, nothing has changed from the ancient world.

We’re still infatuated with idols.

The foolishness of nations listening to their wooden idols of comfort, wealth, power, privilege and the senseless pandering to misguided ideas has brought us to an immense fork in the road. Follow the narrow path back towards ‘the Lord [who] is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King’ (verse 10a), or continue on the highway to destruction.

Fortunately, our God is great, and his name is mighty in power. He is full of mercy and justice, and he has sent his Son, Jesus, to speak through the Spirit, guiding us back on the path.

For God is good and wise and seeks the best for his people. And he desires that the nations of the world would look to him rather than idols.

I pray that we can find a way to support our leaders to look to God’s holy way and bring us back to the path of life that God can show us.

**Lord Jesus, Light of the World, reveal your wisdom and hope that we might see your power in my life and in the world around me. Amen.**

Wednesday 15 June 2022

# The appearance of God

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him (Ezekiel 1:28a).**

Read Ezekiel 1:4–6,22–28

When I was young, my parents showed me depictions of what God the Father looked like. Universally, it was presented as an old white man with a flowing grey beard, sitting rigidly on a golden throne, and more often than not, he looked pretty angry.

For the longest while, because of this depiction, I was always afraid that God the Grumpy Grandfather was this close to smiting me for the things I did wrong.

Fast forward 40 years.

In the Prep class of my school, the children were asked to draw a picture of what they thought God looked like and then write a sentence about it. Here are some of the results:

I think God is flying in the sky. He gives presents.
– Johnny

God has big ears, so he can hear everyone.
– Reuben

God is like a sheep.
– Eden

I think God is a girl, and she is outside playing.
– Harlow

I think God is a golden cloud, and he flies everywhere.
– Levi

Amazingly, Levi comes closest to Ezekiel’s vision of ‘the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord’ (verse 28b). Sitting on the throne is a human-like figure, from the waist up, glowing metal, and from the waist down, fire. The figure seems to be on an iridescent throne above everything.

When I ponder Ezekiel’s vision, I wonder what it will be like to eventually see the appearance of God. Will I fall facedown like Ezekiel? Will I be overwhelmed with joy? Will I be frightened?

Maybe we all will be surprised about what God looks like. But I don’t think we’ll be surprised what God is like. Merciful, gracious, forgiving, slow-to-anger and abounding in steadfast love. Regardless of what God’s appearance is like, we know that in Jesus, we have access to God’s Spirit.

That’s something to be thankful for.

**Heavenly Father, reveal your heart to me, please. Remind me again of your mercy, forgiveness, grace and abounding love. Amen.**

Thursday 16 June 2022

# Working for the weekend

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**In his defence, Jesus said to the [Jewish leaders], ‘My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working’ (John 5:17).**

Read John 5:17–23

When I was younger, I had this misconception about God’s work in creation. Because God’s time in the heavenly workshop was just over six days, and on that seventh day, God rested from his work, I thought this was a perpetual thing. Like God was taking his hands off the steering wheel on Saturdays, just to see what would happen.

When Jesus confronts the leadership regarding the Sabbath and the allowable things, he lets them in on a secret: God’s rest still looks a lot like work. And the work that he is doing is the continual process of bringing all creation back into alignment (Romans 8:21 paraphrased).

But it is not just that God the Father is continuing his work in creation, but the Son continues to reconcile the world and all people to himself. His work is to draw people to the light and hope of the world, turn them inside out, and remind them with a delightful whisper in their ears: You are never alone. I am always with you. Now get out there and live life fully for the Father and each other.

Just like with his Father, in Jesus, there is no deviation from the eternal goal of connecting creation with the sacred wonder of the Trinity.

God’s peace to you as you wander in wonder through the creative genius of the God who continues to work miracles in this world.

**Thank you, God, for continuing to work in the world and in me. Continue to speak your encouragement to me as we live the abundant life you’ve set out for us. Amen.**

Friday 17 June 2022

# Immeasurable

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine … to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:20,21).**

Read Ephesians 3:14–21

One of the most beautiful things about science is that there is an attempt to measure everything. From the weight of the earth to the number of atoms in a human cell. From the number of stars in the sky to the size of space itself. Some scientists have tried to measure the weight of a human soul. But as we all know, some things are immeasurable: the breadth of a parent’s love for their child. How much joy is experienced when life turns for the better.

Another such thing is the limitless ability of God to do more than we even imagine. God’s imagination is immeasurable, and his goodness cannot be weighed.

So, what kinds of immeasurable things can I ask for then?

I think a great start is what comes after our Scripture today. The things that are written in Ephesians 4 – these almost unimaginable things.

‘Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace’ (Ephesians 4:2,3).

In our world of pride and coarseness, impatience and the unbearable feeling of selfishness, the most unimaginable and immeasurable gift of God is unity in the Spirit. When Paul encourages us to ‘grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge’, we can ask God for this immeasurable thing.

What kinds of immeasurable things do you ask God for?

**Holy Spirit, the bringer of peace that surpasses all understanding, guard my heart and mind. Strengthen me with power so that Christ may dwell in my heart through faith. Amen.**

Saturday 18 June 2022

# Deliverance

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs (Psalm 22:20).**

Read Psalm 22:19–28

Have you ever been on a plane that was either in the midst of a storm or skirting it? How flimsy the armrests feel as you grip them tighter with each successive drop of turbulence. The overhead lockers clatter, and the people around you are frightened when the captain proclaims, ‘Flight attendants, please take your seats’. Your heart starts to pound against the inner wall of your chest. Because, in this situation, you have absolutely no control over what is going on around you: not over the weather or the captain or the fact that you are eight kilometres above the ground!

Rarely in life are we truly in control, which is why, in those heart-stopping moments, we cry out to God for deliverance, just as David did in our reading today. Surrounded by villains, sword-bearing enemies, packs of dogs, lions and wild oxen, David calls out, ‘Deliver me! Rescue me! Save my life!’

In those stressful moments of life, when we feel ruthlessly attacked and severely out of control, we can be reminded that we have a God who ‘… has not hidden his face from [us] but has listened to [our] cry for help’ (verse 24b). We are blessed to have a God who cares for us, stays with us in those times, and reminds us that ultimately, we are safe in him.

Thus, amid the storm or when hounded by ‘the wicked, the sinners and the mockers’ (Psalm 1:1), we can say, ‘Those who seek the Lord will praise him – may [our] hearts live forever!’ (verse 26b).

What is one time in your life when you’ve felt out of control? How did God help you through that time?

**Divine Rescuer, in my times of fear, bring me to a place of safety where I can praise you. Amen.**

Sunday 19 June 2022

# Release from captivity

by Norma Koehne

**The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ‘Return home and tell how much God has done for you’ (Luke 8:38,39b).**

Read Luke 8:26–39

What a sorry state this poor man was in, absolutely tormented by the many demons/voices, making the man's life a misery. We all know people who are troubled in their minds by depression or other forms of mental illness. This man would appear to have some form of schizophrenia. Everyone in the community feared him, and he was an outcast, roaming naked among the tombs.

What a change Jesus makes in his life. He was healed and was found ‘sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind’. Sitting at Jesus’ feet is a way of saying he wanted to be with Jesus and learn from him, that he believed in him. He was so relieved and thankful that he wanted to go with Jesus as a pupil. For once, Jesus tells him to stay in his home and tell everyone what God had done for him.

One would expect that the people of the village would be amazed and excited to have witnessed this miracle. But the opposite occurred. They were afraid and asked Jesus to leave their town, possibly because they were aware of their failure to obey the Jewish law because they owned pigs.

We may consider that we are nothing like this tormented soul, but as sinners, we, too, know the torment of guilt and are figuratively wandering naked among the tombs. Thank God that through the Holy Spirit, we have been healed through our baptism and have the privilege of ‘sitting at Jesus’ feet’ every day as we worship, immerse ourselves in the study of God’s word, and speak to him in prayer.

**Thank you, Father, that through Jesus’ suffering and death, you have relieved us from the torment of sin and alienation from you. Help us show love and compassion to those troubled in mind and spirit. Amen.**

Norma grew up at Koonibba in SA. She was a teacher at Concordia College and then served in various roles in Papua New Guinea with her husband. Returning to Australia, Norma worked as an International Student Advisor and, after completing a PhD, worked in administration at the University of Divinity. She has been privileged to serve the LCA on the General Church Council, Seminary Council, and as president of Lutheran Women of Victoria and Lutheran Women of Australia. Currently, she is happily retired.