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**Sunday 1 August 2021 to Sunday 8 August 2021**

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Sunday 1 August 2021

# Doing the work of God

by Pastor Mark Gierus

**‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent’ (John 6:28,29).**

Read John 6:24–35

Have you ever been confused about what God really wants from you?

What should I do, God? Should I sign up for a new program that has something to do with mission? Perhaps I need to pray harder or read every word of the Bible? Am I working hard enough for you?

Often the work of the devil is to draw us into thinking like this – am I doing enough?

You see, the devil often burdens us with lies like this – are you doing more and more for Jesus? Instead of doing things out of faith, we get drawn into thinking, am I doing enough for faith? Faith is a gift not earned at all by our works for God, rather given so we can walk in the works, the good deeds of God as Saint Paul reminded us, ‘we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do’ (Ephesians 2).

Jesus tells us today as he did the people of his day a very simple truth. It has faith at the heart of the matter. You see, it is not so much what we do in life; rather, it is what is done in faith. If all our actions are done to others out of our faith in Jesus, then lives are changed because people meet the one who is both the author and perfector of our faith, Jesus Christ.

So, what is it that we must do to perform the works of God? The work of God is simply this: to believe in the one whom the Father has sent. In other words, to believe in Jesus. I don’t know about you, but that is somewhat freeing, isn’t it? To do the works of God is simply to believe. In faith, we receive all God has promised us in his only Son – eternal life, salvation and forgiveness of sins. And in faith, our good deeds and our works are for God’s glory by sharing his love with the world.

**Gracious Father, you call us to do good works, and the good work is to believe in your only Son, Jesus. Strengthen our faith, so we see your Son in our life and follow him boldly living in this world where you have placed us to share your love through our actions in Jesus. Amen.**

Monday 2 August 2021

# Fed by the Lord

by Pastor Mark Gierus

**Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there shall be none (Exodus 16:26).**

Read Exodus 16:22–26;31–35

This lovely passage gives us an insight into the heart of God and his dealings with his people. It is God who rescued his people out of Egypt. God broke the bonds of slavery and then parted the Red Sea. He led his people towards the Promised Land. And it was God who along the way sustained his people, providing manna from heaven for them. But it goes even deeper.

Our text for today tells us that the people were to gather twice as much bread as on the other days, for the Lord said that the next day was a holy Sabbath – a rest day where there shall be no bread.

The Sabbath for God’s people to observe is to rest in their God and Father. To rest from, in this case, collecting food and other daily jobs and instead, resting in God – for he fully satisfies.

You and I have the invitation to the same. To take a break from your labours and rest in God. It’s not only about resting from the work you do. Jesus calls us to rest in him when we are tired from the burden of sin, guilt and shame. You see, Jesus nourishes, heals and satisfies all of our needs in him. He forgives us because he died for us, taking on our sin, shame and guilt and setting us free from slavery to sin. He continues to feed us by his word daily. He continues to invite us to rest in him and live our new life daily.

In worship, God comes to us in bread and wine and by his word. He loves us and provides all we need. When we spend time in his word, he speaks to us by his spirit, reminding us of his great love in Jesus for us. Jesus rescued us and will continue to provide for us, feeding us along the way as we wait for eternity (although we have eternity now by faith in Jesus) when he returns to take all who believe with him forever. Today, you have been fed by his very word. Ask Jesus to fully satisfy you in all you need for today, tomorrow and always.

**Dear God, let me make time to rest in you always. Let me hear your voice. Help me know more of your deep love and provision for all my needs and the needs of those I come in contact with each day. Feed me so that I am fully satisfied. In Jesus’ name. Amen.**

Tuesday 3 August2021

# Time to do a budget

by Pastor Mark Gierus

**Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? (Isaiah 55:2)**

Read Isaiah 55:1–5

Do you do a regular budget? Do you like to notice where you are spending your money and plan to buy things when you need them? But how many of us spend our money on things that are not really what we need?

In today’s reading, you and I are invited to come – to come and buy something valuable without money and without cost. This sounds too good to be true. Surely there is a catch? Or perhaps you might think this is an absolute bargain.

The invitation is to those who are thirsty and those who have no money. But is the invitation only for those who have no money? ‘Come buy and eat’ suggests there might have been some food – maybe bread – that goes along with the wine and the milk. This is starting to sound like a banquet for free. ‘Come buy without money’ – so this is simply to receive. Come and receive the wonderful blessings of a feast.

But now the suggestion is that perhaps people with money and work are invited too. Why spend your money on what is not bread or work for what will not satisfy?

So do you spend your money on the right things? Are you working for the things that satisfy you? Perhaps you are building up riches for yourself and working for what you might imagine will get you to heaven or give you eternal joy? Or are you coming to receive the free gifts of God, his love, his mercy, his grace, his forgiveness and his healing?

Come and receive the free gifts of God in his Son, Jesus. Come without money. Come as you are to receive forgiveness, eternal life and salvation. Come to be saved from sin, eternal death and the power of the devil because of the work of Jesus on the cross for you. This gift is offered as a feast to you in faith by the very word of God.

Working for and spending money on the right things is easy as you follow Jesus. Easy as you accept his invitation to come and walk with him in faith. So live out the freedom you have in Jesus, boldly keeping your eyes on your Lord. The best thing is that he will give you the strength to do so.

**O Lord, thank you so much for all you give me without cost, except that of your only Son Jesus who suffered and died for my sins and won the victory over sin, death and the devil – all because you love me. Let me feast on your goodness, your love, your mercy, your grace and your peace in Jesus’ name. Amen.**

Wednesday 4 July 2021

# God’s will

by Pastor Mark Gierus

**For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day (John 6:40).**

Read John 6:35–40

What is God’s will for humanity, for the whole world? In our world today, many people ask questions about the existence of God. Then if people accept that God exists, they often ask things about the goodness of God and why bad things happen, especially to good people. Surely good people can get to heaven; after all, they have earned it.

But does it come as a surprise to you that God actually loves the world – the whole world? When God created the world and everything in existence, he saw all that he had made, and it was good (Genesis 1). So, God has a plan for the world after Adam and Eve disobeyed him. He sent his one and only Son Jesus to suffer and die for your sin and my sin and the sin of the whole world.

Jesus tells us what our Father in Heaven’s will is for all people. Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life. God wants all people to be saved, but it is only by faith in Jesus that we have eternal life. It is not our goodness, our actions or our birthright. It is not even that we might belong to a Christian denomination that gets us into heaven. It is simply by faith. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus, the only Son of God.

So when the world tells you that you must do more to earn favour with God, you can confidently reply, ‘It is by faith that I have eternal life. Faith in Jesus whom God sent into the world to save all people from sin and eternal death who look to him in faith’.

When the world says that you get to heaven because you are just a good person, you can say, ‘I believe in Jesus, for he has saved me, forgiven me and swapped my best efforts to be good with his goodness, love and grace. And in this world, I now have peace because I am made right with God, for Jesus has taken away my sin’.

***Heavenly Father, may I always seek to do your will and not my will. Help me to be humble as I live each day following your Son Jesus and sharing your deep love with everyone I see this day. Lord, bless all people by your presence through your word by your Spirit. Send us each day to serve you as we serve others so all may see that eternal life is by faith alone in Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.***

Thursday 5 August 2021

# If only you had been here, Lord

by Pastor Mark Gierus

**‘Lord,’ Martha said to Jesus, ‘if you had been here, my brother would not have died’ (John 11:21).**

Read John 11:20–27

Do you ever feel this way? The same as Martha did that day? ‘Jesus, if only you had been here, this would not be the end.’ ‘Jesus, if only you would have been here, things would still be okay.’ ‘Jesus, if only you had been here, I wouldn’t be facing something I don’t like.’

We often feel like Martha in life – if only. But do you live as an ‘if only’ Christian? Or do you live a little differently?

The world constantly tries to entice us to live in such a way that we start longing for change when things don’t suit us. When things don’t work out or if we are put in an uncomfortable position, we are tempted to say, ‘If only things were different’.

‘If only I had more money, I would be more generous or happier or more stable.’ ‘If only I could have more things, I would feel more satisfied.’ ‘If only I could have a new wife, husband or partner, things would be so much better, and I would be more fulfilled.’ ‘If only, Jesus, you gave me the things I needed to be happy and satisfied, things would be amazing.’

But you see, Jesus has already given us and continues to give us all we need today, tomorrow and forever. He gives us all we need. It might not be what we want for our lives to be easier or trouble-free with no suffering or sadness, but Jesus gives us all we need to face every situation – because quite simply, he gives himself fully.

Jesus is always here for you, for he is with you every moment of every day, shaping, moulding and growing you in his word by his spirit. Whatever happens, you have nothing to fear, for Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in him will never die, for faith in Jesus holds onto forgiveness of sin, eternal life and salvation.

So, be fully satisfied in Jesus. Take his unseen hand in faith, and let him lead you while you walk on this earth doing the work God has sent you to do, sharing Jesus with others. He will one day lead you home where he will hold you eternally.

**Dear Jesus, hold me, take me by my hand every day, and lead me into your work, both in my life and as I meet others. May I have a heart for you, Lord, seeing the needs of others around me, so they know you are meeting them where they are. Thank you that you are all I need and that you provide everything for me in this life and forever. Amen.**

Friday 6 August 2021

# How much is enough?

by Pastor Mark Gierus

**You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:11).**

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6–15

When it comes to giving, how do you go with that? Would you say you give from the leftover stuff you have, or would you say you give because you can?

If you won a substantial amount of money or inherited it, what would you do with it? Do you ever play that game thinking about how you would spend a large amount of money you received? New car? Pay off debts, mortgage, and school fees, buy new clothes, take holidays (in our more limited COVID travel context), or simply put it in the bank? But would you give some away?

What does God say about giving? Do you need to give a percentage? Or what you promise, no matter what? You see, it is not about the amount, nor is it up to you and me to judge what others should be giving either. Saint Paul reminds us today to give what we have decided to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion. This is about cheerful giving.

God wants us to give and to be generous but cheerful in the giving. If it is not money, give your time cheerfully. If it is a skill that someone else needs, share it with a cheerful heart. And if it is money, give what you decide cheerfully, not guilted into an amount by others.

God will enrich us day by day, especially by his word, so we can be generous with the gifts God gives us. Yes, I am talking about worldly things but also the gift of God’s grace, mercy and love, which we can share generously with others around us.

Start with a generous heart in everything you do, and God who is faithful will give you all you need to do the work he sends you to do in Jesus’ name.

**Gracious Father, you give us so much. Help us give generously in all things – our time, our talents, and our treasures, knowing that you have first given to us. Thank you that while we were still sinners, you generously gave us your only Son, Jesus, to suffer and die for our sins. Bless us in all we do. Amen.**

Saturday 7 August 2021

# Endless praise

by Pastor Mark Gierus

**I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him (Psalm 34:1,8).**

Read Psalm 34:1–8

How are you feeling today? Do you feel like giving thanks for something? Perhaps you are not in that place at all, and you are more likely to complain than praise? 'Why isn’t God even near me, easing my pain or taking away my trouble?'

Yet here, the psalmist boldly claims that they will extol or enthusiastically praise the Lord and even bolder – at all times. What is this? Surely no-one can keep this up; after all, do you find yourself some mornings a little more tired than you should be? Are you feeling run-down and overwhelmed with the things of life and the demands on every second you live? Yet now, this enthusiastic psalmist almost throws it in your face, suggesting they are a little better in the praise effort than you are.

This beautiful psalm gives us an answer to the endless praise given by the psalmist to the Lord. It is not my effort of trying to praise God endlessly that is important. Rather, it is the word of God that is.

The one who takes refuge in the Lord is blessed. What is this about? To lean into him. To be totally honest with him and say, ‘Lord, I’m failing badly here. I am a sinner, or I am so weak and tired. Help me, rescue me, save me’.

The Lord is your refuge and strength. He is a refuge because he is faithful and loves you. He cares about you; every breath you take, he cares about. God cares about your every anxious thought and the self-talk that says, ‘I am a failure’. He holds you and gives you peace. In Jesus, he forgives you all your sins and sets you free from sin, death and the power of the devil.

The praise then comes from who God is in us. What he has done and continues to do in us by his Spirit through his word. Taste and see that the Lord is good. When we taste the word of God, the eyes of our hearts are opened in faith to see that the Lord is good. And so, in faith, we can only praise our God continually.

**Gracious Father, you are good. You feed us with the very word that comes from your mouth. You love me, and you have a purpose for me to live in you by your Holy Spirit. Open my mouth daily to praise you for all you have done through your Son, Jesus. Amen.**

Sunday 8 August 2021

# My son, my son

by Colleen Fitzpatrick

**O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! (2 Samuel 18:33)**

Read 2 Samuel 18:5–9,15,31–33

Talk about skeletons in Jesus’ family closet! Mind you, the ones that are referred to in today’s reading are about 25 greats back into the family tree in King David’s time. We have David committing adultery, and one of his sons, Amnon, commits incest. Another son, Absalom, seeks revenge for his sister by killing Amnon. Absalom also sets fire to a neighbour’s field when the neighbour won’t intercede with King David on his behalf. And when he is allowed to return from exile, he goes on to try to usurp his father.

What a family! Absalom doesn’t sound like a very nice person, even though he was a handsome man with a fantastic head of hair.

Yet King David loves Absalom, his wayward son. He grieves deeply for him when told of his death. You can hear the agony in his words, ‘O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom. Would I had died instead of you’.

The grief of a parent is always lurking in the shadows, ready to emerge when a child is hurt physically or emotionally, when expectations are not met, when things go wrong, or when a son or daughter dies.

Loving parents want the best for their children. They want to be proud of them, to be able to brag to other parents about their achievements and the wonderful things that they are doing. But things aren’t always picture-perfect, are they? The hopes and dreams of our parents haven’t always come to fruition, and there are times when tragedy strikes a family, and parents may cry out in despair, just as King David did all of those years ago.

We have a Father in heaven who welcomes us into God’s kingdom. Maybe there are times when we cause our Heavenly Father to grieve – yet that Father is always there, ready and willing and waiting for us to come with our frailties and imperfections and welcome us with joy into his presence.

Of this, we can always be sure.

**Heavenly Father, you sent your Son to die for us so that despite all of our frailties and failings, we can still be sure of your love and acceptance. Please help us to accept that love and let it shine through our lives into the lives of those who are near and dear to us. Amen.**