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**Sunday 22 May 2022 to Sunday 29 May 2022**

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Sunday 22 May 2022

# Hearing the Father’s words

by Carolyn Ehrlich

**These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me (John 14:24b).**

Read John 14:23–29

In the first two verses of today’s reading, three words jump out at me: love, obey and hear.

If we love God, then we will obey the teaching of Jesus. To do this, we must hear our Father’s voice, the words he is telling us. Note that the words belong to the Father. God the Father spoke to God the Son through God the Holy Spirit (who descended on Jesus when he was baptised).

And how are we to hear God’s word? In verse 26, we are told the Advocate – the Holy Spirit – will remind us of everything. So, we can read God’s word and the words that Jesus spoke, but it is the Holy Spirit who reminds us.

It is important to read, understand and obey God’s instructions. And Jesus has given us these words. But how do we apply them in our daily life? To take an example from the current passage in John. In verse 27, Jesus says, ‘Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid’.

But what troubles my heart and the things that I am afraid of might be different for you. Or, the things that worry you today might not be the same things that troubled you last week. And what I might need to do to be obedient to this direction from God might be different from what you need to do.

Practically, then, how can we hear the words of God the Father through the Holy Spirit so that we can apply them in our daily lives? One way to do this is in your daily devotions, such as this one. But it could also be in other readings you do or in the sermons you listen to. Before, during and after your devotions, Bible readings or listening to sermons, ask God directly, ‘What are you saying to me personally, Lord?’ God has promised that his sheep hear his voice. Listen, hear, obey – all because you love God.

**Father God, the words I hear belong to you; they come from you. Thank you that you sent Jesus and your Holy Spirit – who dwells in me – so that I might hear and obey. Open the ears of my heart and spirit so that I might listen to what you are saying to me personally. You have promised as one of your sheep that I will hear your voice. Help me to hear. In Jesus’ awesome name, I pray, Amen.**

Monday 23 May 2022

# Servitude and persecution

by Carolyn Ehrlich

**Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master’ (John 15:20a).**

Read John 15:18–27

In our secular world, we are encouraged to believe that when we are on the right path, the world conspires to help us. When we do what is consistent with our life’s journey, we will be satisfied and successful. We are the masters of our own destiny. But, in today’s reading, we are given a very different perspective about what it means to be on God’s path, doing the work that God has planned in advance for us to do.

As servants of God, as brothers and sisters of Jesus, we do not belong to the world. We have been chosen out of this world. And the world will hate us because of that. The world will persecute us because of Jesus’ name and hate us for no reason (verse 25).

So, my question today is to ask whether we are on God’s path or the path of this world? If we are not being persecuted, we might not be on God’s path. Scarily, we might be oblivious and ignorant to the one we are on, especially if we feel comfortable.

In some work that Will Mancini and Warren Bird have written, I am reminded that God has a long-term vision and that we need to rise above our very short-term perspectives and think about what is going on in long time frames. We need to rise above our short-term desires for comfort in this world and become uncomfortable with the longer-term trends that are visible when we look. We need to be the hands and feet of God in this world.

So, what do we need to do? In verse 27 of today’s reading, we are reminded that we must testify. Testify, bear witness to Jesus’ name, do the work that God has planned for us to do and be prepared to be hated by the world for the work we do. I don’t find this easy to think about. Do you?

**Father God, through Jesus, you speak to me. Thank you for giving me your word, and thank you that your word is truth. Thank you for giving me your Son and Holy Spirit to teach and guide me. Help me to be your hands and feet. Help me to bear testament to your name and truth. Show me what you need me to do, and help me recognise that the world will hate me because of what I do in obedience to you. In Jesus’ precious name, I pray. Amen.**

Tuesday 24 May 2022

# What are you saying to me personally, Lord?

by Carolyn Ehrlich

**They kept asking, ‘What does he mean by “a little while”? We don’t understand what he is saying’ (John 16:18).**

Read John 16:16–24

Jesus had told his disciples that they would see him in a little while, they would not see him anymore, and then after a little while, they would see him. The disciples did not understand what Jesus was telling them. The disciples had been with Jesus since his ministry began, but they did not understand. Instead of asking Jesus what he meant, they discussed it among themselves.

How often do we do that? How often do we discuss among ourselves what Jesus meant? Although discussion is good and often healthy, unless we ask Jesus to help us develop a real and meaningful relationship with him, we rely on others to help us interpret what ‘things’ mean.

These ‘things’ might refer to experiences we have in our lives. They might be about how to interpret and understand God’s teaching through Scriptures, or they might be any of a number of different parts of our lives. Although we might discuss things with our best friends and those we believe to be our wisest counsel, humans interpret things through human filters. Instead, ask Jesus.

How often do you turn to Jesus when you are confused or unsure about what he says to you personally? How often do you ask him to help you understand? How often do you lean into your personal relationship with Jesus? Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus? Are you holding up your part in that relationship? Ask and then look, listen, and obey.

After all, later in verse 24, Jesus says, ‘Ask in my name and you will receive, and your joy will be complete’. Listen in the silence. Be sure to listen for his whisper rather than listening only for shouts. Through the Holy Spirit, our relationship with Jesus is personal. Ask, look, listen. And the best bit – ‘your joy will be complete’. Ask Jesus today to help you deepen your personal relationship with him through the Holy Spirit to understand what he is saying to you so that your joy is complete.

**Father God, thank you that I can rely on your promises. Thank you for your promise that my joy will be complete when I receive the things I ask for in Jesus’ name. Today, I ask that you help me deepen my relationship with you. Help me hear the whispers of your Holy Spirit. Help me stand in your light and understand what your word means in my life. In Jesus’ awesome name, I pray. Amen.**

Wednesday 25 May 2022

# Take heart – the world has been overcome

by Carolyn Ehrlich

**In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33).**

Read John 16:25–33

It is easy to assume that believing in Jesus means our problems disappear as if by magic. But nothing could be further from the truth. Here, Jesus tells us that we will have trouble in this world; we can expect to. Wars, pandemics, challenges with our neighbours, kids, parents, boss, church leadership, government, health, the health of our loved ones … the list is long.

But Jesus also tells us to take heart. Why? How can he be so sure that we can do this and be comforted, experience peace and be joyful in the midst of trouble? Because he has overcome the world. The forces of Satan are overcome. Jesus won! Now, of course, Satan doesn’t want us to remember that. But in every situation that we face, now and into the future, Satan has been overpowered. Sure, we still live in a world in which the forces of Satan exist – but the important – and only – thing to remember is that Jesus has overcome.

So, take heart. Take comfort in the reassurance of Jesus, ‘I have overcome the world’. And remember that he also instructs us not to be afraid. In John 6:20, when he walks on the stormy seas in the dark to the disciples who are alone and rowing a boat, he says, ‘It is I. Do not be afraid’. Jesus has overcome. It is him. Do not fear. Now. This day. This week. Ever. How awesome is our God!

**Jesus, you told us that you have overcome the world. You say to us, ‘It is I. Do not be afraid’. Help me in my unbelief. Thank you that you have overcome the world. Thank you that you are with me and that I need not be afraid. As I go about today, this week and this year, remind me that you are my strength, my fortress, my God, and I need not be afraid. I can take heart because you have overcome. Thank you, Lord. Amen.**

Thursday 26 May 2022

# Supernatural power

by Carolyn Ehrlich

**I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49).**

Read Luke 24:44–53

The Father promised the Holy Spirit, and Jesus sent him to clothe the disciples with power. How often do you think about the power of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit that hovered over the waters at creation? The power of God that can just speak and things happen? The power of God that raised Jesus from the dead. The power of God that heals. The power of God that is in storms and thunder and earthquakes … an awesome, almighty power.

And then Jesus sends that power to clothe us. What amazing things can we do if we lean into the power that God has clothed us with? What faith does this require? What would it be like to sit for a while today and ponder this power? Consider why God would clothe his people with his power from on high. Ponder for a little or a long time, but contemplate and listen to his whispers and obey. Think also about the readings for the past few days. Wonder at God’s almighty power. Be amazed; be awed. Fear God. He is an awesome Father who has clothed us with his Holy Spirit. Love … listen … obey.

**Father God, you sent your Holy Spirit to clothe your people. Thank you that you are my God. Help me recognise your mightiness, power and awesomeness. Help me hear your whispers and follow your will obediently. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.**

Friday 27 May 2022

# A faithful spirit

by Carolyn Ehrlich

**‘Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit’, Elisha replied (2 Kings 2:9b).**

Read 2 Kings 2:1–12

Elisha was Elijah’s protégé. Elisha was transitioning to take on his job. But he recognised the faithful spirit of Elijah. Elisha asked that he take over his work and receive a double portion of his faithfulness. And it was granted.

At the same time as taking on the faithful spirit of Elijah, Elisha was different from Elijah. We recognise Elijah as a great prophet, but Elisha did more miracles, Elisha spent more time with people, and Elisha showed tenderness and ongoing compassion for others, which was quite different from Elijah’s prophetic ministry.

Even though Elisha asked for and inherited a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, he did not try and replicate Elijah. Instead, he worked with the strengths that God had given him.

So, we need to admire the faithfulness of others, and we need to replicate those spiritual gifts, but we need to do it in our own God-led way. How God leads and directs me is different to how God leads and directs you. How God leads and directs me is different to how God leads and directs you. It is within this diversity that we can collectively act as one body of Christ. Ask God today to lead you into realising your God-given gifts, talents and strengths to his glory.

**Heavenly Father, you have given each of us unique gifts and talents. Like Elisha, I pray that you will fill me with a spirit of faithfulness to you. Thank you for all that you have given me. Show me how to use my unique gifts, talents and strengths for your glory this day and always. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.**

Saturday 28 May 2022

# God, our lifeguard

by Carolyn Ehrlich

**Let those who love the Lord hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked (Psalm 97:10).**

Read Psalm 97

Our God delivers us from the hands of the wicked. We pray in the Lord’s prayer, deliver us from evil. God guards the lives of those who are faithful.

I find it reassuring that there are lifeguards on the beach. Although some people are confident in and around water, I am not. I make sure that I don’t venture too far. I make sure that I stay between the flags (even though the most I do is wade in shallow water).

Here, the psalmist tells us that God is our lifeguard and deliverer. The psalmist also tells us in verse 2 that the foundations of his throne are righteousness and justice. Then in verse 6, they say that everyone is able to see God’s glory because the earth sees God and trembles, the heavens proclaim his righteousness, and the mountains melt before him.

Our God is almighty, and his creation bears witness to his mightiness. The power of God’s creation is the same power that he uses to deliver us from the hand of the wicked. How awesome is it to trust our God to that level? And what does God ask of us in return? To hate evil. So today, be alert, be faithful, love the Lord your God and hate evil.

**Father God, you are my lifeguard. You deliver those who are faithful to you and who love you from the hand of the wicked. Thank you that you are my Lord. I love you, Lord. Show me how to live my life in faithful service to you. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.**

Sunday 29 May 2022

# He wants to know me?

by Stuart Gray

**[My prayer is] that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me (John 17:21).**

Read John 17:20–26

I once participated in a game ‘who is the most famous person you have met?’ As a small group of people, we had quite a list of notable people we had met. We were in awe that we had been in close contact with these people.

So try to imagine just how awesome it is that the creator and co-creator of the universe not only want to meet us but want to have a deep and loving relationship with us. In fact, Jesus wants us to have the same relationship with him as he has with his Father. That’s really awesome.

Jesus also prays that the relationships we have among and between ourselves are modelled on the relationship he has with God.

Most of us have experienced love in our human relationships – love for spouses, parents, children, other family members and friends. But what often happens is we get caught up in the messiness of our relationships, the conflicts, the dramas, the hurt caused either deliberately or unknowingly, and the issues caused by uneven growth and development of individuals within a relationship.

Jesus fervently prays that our relationship with each other and with him is the same as with his Father.

Jesus prays that we be with him so we can see his glory – it’s awesome beyond imagination that the Father and Son, creators of the universe, want to personally share with us the glory of creation.

God becoming man and Jesus paying the ultimate sacrifice and overcoming death gives us access to God. Jesus lived as we do, among us and in us.

I am more aware of the chasm between what Jesus prayed for and who I am, than I am of the love that Jesus prays for. Yet Jesus says our love for each other and him is a witness to him and his relationship with God.

John places this prayer just before Jesus is betrayed. Even knowing the fate that awaits him, he selflessly wants for all believers the indwelling relationship Jesus has with his Father.

**Heavenly Father, we pray that our relationships in the world reflect the relationship between you and your Son, Jesus Christ, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, that the world believes your Son died to reconcile the world to you. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.**