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**Sunday 25 September 2022 to Sunday 2 October 2022**

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Sunday 25 September 2022

# The other Lazarus

by Sal Huckel

**He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead’ (Luke 16:31).**

Read Luke 16:19–31

We begin a week of reminders about truth.

This is one of my favourite Gospel stories about wisdom that is so helpful in our Christian walk. It’s perhaps not so well known to many. In fact, it’s sometimes known as being about ‘the other Lazarus’.

We may spend so much time trying to convince others of the truth in a particular situation, knowing that ‘the truth will set us free’ (John 8:32). Sometimes, we cannot understand why we are not experiencing that promise in earthly terms.

Remember this story the next time you are discouraged, disadvantaged or persecuted, or maybe simply praying earnestly for a family member who has a miracle right before them – and still does not believe.

As if we don’t need any more reminders – we do know, of course, that there were people who saw a man rise from the dead (Jesus) and did not believe. Even some of Jesus’ close followers needed a nudge or to touch his hands and side.

Whatever situation you are in right now, where others simply will not believe, remember: You are in the best company: Jesus’ company!

Some couldn’t see any miracle at all. Even when a man was raised from the dead, they would not believe. We do not have a God who only acts by ‘our works’. We have a God of miracles; they are his. We remain faithful in prayer.

***Lord, open our eyes and ears to see and hear your truth. Give me patience when I cannot persuade with testimony and truth known to you and others. 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.

Monday 26 September 2022

# A prophet has been among them

by Sal Huckel

**And whether they listen or fail to listen – for they are a rebellious people – they will know that a prophet has been among them (Ezekiel 2:5).**

Read Ezekiel 2:1–7

This is a really interesting passage. God himself warns Ezekiel that he is being sent to rebellious and stubborn people. What a send! He’s going into it with his eyes open and is assured that – whether they listen or not – they will know a prophet has been among them. There isn’t a promise of success or a turnaround story – just the assurance and knowledge that he is being given an assignment, God has a purpose, and he has a mission.

We might think of Jesus’ instructions to his followers: ‘If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet’ (Matthew 10:14).

We have it here in Jesus’ words too. We will not always be welcome as Jesus followers, prophets, truth-tellers, teachers … in any assignment we are given in our ministries.

Stay faithful and pray for the knowledge for when it’s time to think about dusting off your sandals.

**Lord, give me the courage, strength and freedom from fear when bringing your word to others and following the instructions you give me. Guide me with your Holy Spirit and wisdom in all circumstances. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

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Tuesday 27 September 2022

# Truth-telling

by Sal Huckel

**There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth (Amos 5:10).**

Read Amos 5:10–15

This Scripture passage doesn’t hold back, does it?! With a strong sense of justice (and a career in the law to prove it!), I am passionate about truth in my Christian walk as well. This passage speaks to my core values, and I hope it speaks to yours too.

It’s not that easy, though. Even in our Christian circles, families and churches, there can be so many perspectives on truth and testimony – and sometimes, for many reasons, even just fear or other priorities, telling the truth isn’t always welcomed or believed.

I often like to remind myself of the promise: ‘Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’ (John 8:32). It is of great comfort to remember this in times of persecution and false testimony. We are set free in the heavenly realm; we have eternal life and justice forever. We won’t always see God’s justice on this earth, and that is a tension we live with as Christians in a fallen world.

Truth-tellers are not always welcome. They are often called by God, though. Have we loved every correction from the Lord, no matter how gracious and gentle? Are our pastors’ sermons always welcome when they speak truth into the darkness? Our response to the truth does not change its eternal truth.

Take heart in these verses if you are suffering rejection for speaking or living the truth. This persecution should not be a surprise to us as Christians.

If you are smarting today because of the truth, take it to the Lord and ask for forgiveness and healing. Forgiveness comes with healing, and we do not have to stay forever in our sins and shame.

Shine the light in the darkness. ‘You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’

**Lord, I praise you for being the way, the truth and the life. May my life show the truth to others and show them the way to you. Bring justice where needed, Lord, and help me to always value the truth, however difficult it may be in the face of pressure from others. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

Wednesday 28 September 2022

# Glorify God alone

by Sal Huckel

**How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? (John 5:44)**

Read John 5:25–47

This is a complicated passage. It is worth a slow study – to take in the words and meditate on them. We don’t always have that time, and, of course, there may be a stand-out verse for you to take into your day.

These two verses remind me of the difference between the truth and glory that comes from God and the versions of those we can create to glorify ourselves. The author is steadfast in his hope in God not to seek approval or glory from other people. We all want to be accepted, loved and appreciated. There is a sliding scale of how these desires can manifest in the treatment of others. Sometimes the truth gets lost along the way. We read clearly in this passage that this affects the ability to accept Christ and ‘seek first the kingdom’ (Matthew 6:33).

If we seek and find our identity in Christ, the worth that can come from others’ appreciation (or adulation) is seen for what it is – transient and flimsy. It will not bring us eternal life.

**May we always seek truth, God’s glory, and be ready to testify to the truth in Jesus’ name. Amen.**

Thursday 29 September 2022

# Hypocrisy!

by Sal Huckel

**What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? (James 2:14)**

Read James 2:1–17

In some circles, we are so sensitive as Christians to the idea of ‘works-based faith’, aren’t we? There has got to be a point, though, where our belief, faith and salvation move us to ‘put legs’ on our faith and love others practically.

Perhaps some criticism of Christianity – the calling out of hypocrisy – is grounded in some truth. Yes, the whole of Christianity can be judged by the attributes of Christ’s people. We still battle the selfish desires of our earthly nature.

Jesus’ words here warn against showing favouritism to those with the money, smart clothes, good car … whatever our modern-day equivalent might be. Bought the pew, made a generous donation and worked the hardest at …

Let’s remember that Jesus has no favourites. Let’s also remember that faith without action (and without love) is dead. The workers in the vineyard in Matthew 20 also remind us that the longest and most hardworking workers are not favoured over those who came late to the party (or the field).

While we know that Christians are not perfect, just saved, let us also remember that hypocrisy has no place in our faith walk, and we need to back ourselves and our claim to Jesus’ promises with a little bit of action and a whole lot of love for others.

**Lord, thank you for the promise of eternal life for those who believe in you. Help me to continue to live out my faith with actions that honour you and bring glory to your name and others to you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

Friday 30 September 2022

# False testimony, anyone?

by Sal Huckel

**For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty (2 Peter 1:16).**

Read 2 Peter 1:16–21

What a powerful testimony this is! We know now, of course, that it stands the test of time – and truly, if it was an elaborate ‘cleverly devised story’, it would not be speaking to our hearts and lives today. When we read the Bible, we have the benefit of eyewitness accounts coupled, of course, with the Holy Spirit, speaking to our hearts and giving us the wisdom to understand and believe!

Testimony is an interesting thing, isn’t it? If you have ever heard what you know to be a falsified account, there can often be some clues and indicators we will recognise that the truth has been altered. Sometimes the harder ones to spot contain an element of truth that has been twisted. This, of course, we see in the Garden of Eden. It’s been going on since the dawn of time and human nature – and the fall means it will continue.

The still, small voice of the Holy Spirit is with us for discernment of all sorts of accounts. Pray for him to inspire you today as you read God’s word, which speaks truth to your heart, and help you discern from cleverly devised stories when they come your way.

**Lord, thank you for your Holy Spirit, the reliable accounts in the Bible we have from eyewitnesses, and the access we freely have to your eternal truth. Give me the wisdom to discern and follow the truth and recognise false witnesses. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

Saturday 1 October 2022

# Help is on the way!

by Sal Huckel

**Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes (Psalm 37:7).**

Read Psalm 37:1–9

We are under no illusions as God’s people that we will suﬀer in diﬀerent ways at the hands of others. This looks diﬀerent for all of us, but it is there.

Firstly, an encouragement: God does not send these circumstances to improve or change us. We know that he will work through these circumstances for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28), but that is not the same as organising them for us as some sort of faith formation. Of course, our faith does form and transform as we rely on him in these hard times. We may feel closer to the Lord in the valley than on the mountain top.

Secondly: we know that the psalms are here to express all the forms of human emotion we have and give words to our feelings when we have none. If this psalm today does not speak to your situation right now, have a ﬂick through (or an internet search!) to ﬁnd one that ﬁts and gives voice to your prayers and praises.

Finally: we have some wonderful advice here. Be still and wait patiently for the Lord. Don’t fret. There are evil schemes, and our battle is not against ﬂesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12) and, yes, sometimes, ‘people succeed in their ways’ and ‘their wicked schemes’. We are not promised an easy ride; Christianity is not a crutch, and sometimes we are not rescued. But we have encouragement and resources here – and an assurance that ‘help is on the way’.

**Lord, you are never late. Help is on the way. I bring a situation before you now, which you know about, you are sovereign over, and you are indeed working in. I wait patiently for you – on behalf of myself or others. Help me to trust and serve you in the waiting, faithful God. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**

Sunday 2 October 2022

# A living, growing faith

by Pastor Mark Lieschke

**The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’ (Luke 17:5)**

Read Luke 17:5–10

‘If only I had a stronger faith, then I could serve God better. Then I'd be able to give a better witness to Jesus Christ in my life!’

When we speak like that, we can think that before we can do anything worthwhile for God, our faith in him has to reach a certain level.

We may also think that only a person with a strong faith can ever be really used powerfully by God. We may even go as far as to say that only a person with a strong faith in God can really be sure of eternal life.

But none of those things is true. While we might think that measuring the strength of our faith is important, what is essential is that it is faith in Jesus Christ.

We're saved by God’s grace through Jesus Christ. So even what we might consider a weak or faltering faith, when it's focused on Jesus Christ, is a saving faith and a potential power for good. That's because Jesus Christ connects us to the almighty transforming power of God himself.

God invites us to have a living, growing faith so we can be confident and cheerful about who we are. So he invites us to look to him for strength so that we can give a good witness to others about our relationship with him.

So, we pray, ‘Lord, increase our faith’ so that we are not misled by doubts, fears, selfishness and lovelessness. And we also pray that God would move us now, as weak as our faith may be, to place ourselves at his disposal and let his power work in our lives for the sake of others.

Because of God’s work in our lives, we can say right now: ‘Lord, fill me with your power, and use me as I am and where I am to bring glory to you always’.

**Lord God, thank you for the faith you have enabled us to have in your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Increase our faith in him so that we can reflect his love and grace in our lives. Transform and renew us daily into the people you still want us to become. Amen.**

*Mark Lieschke is a retired pastor living on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. He served in parishes in Adelaide, Palmerston North and Marton (both in New Zealand) and Wagga Wagga (school and congregation) before being elected as bishop of the New South Wales District of the LCANZ. He and his wife Meredith have four children (two of which live in Canada) and two grandchildren. Mark enjoys spending time with family and friends, travelling, walking on the beach and resting.*