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**Sunday 16 August to Sunday 23 August**

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Sunday 16 August 2020

# What comes out

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**The things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart and these defile them (Matthew 15:11).**

Read Matthew 15:1–2,10–20

Isn’t it interesting, that when I read Jesus’ words, I think to myself, ‘Yeah, but what about the coronavirus?’

Jesus was responding to the Pharisees and the Scribes who seemed intent on making sure that the outward parts of bodies are clean, but Jesus could quite literally see to the ‘heart’ of their argument. It is one thing to be clean on the outside, but it is a more difficult thing to be clean on the inside.

Years ago, my brother Ryan worked for the Juvenile Corrections Department. His job was to help troubled youth along their path and, during the week, they would have meetings to talk about feelings and issues. During one of these sessions, my brother was appalled at the abusive and foul language the young men used. So he instituted a rule that whenever any of them swore, they would have to spit into a styrofoam cup.

The boys took this as a challenge thinking that my brother was naïve, so they’d rear back and put a real beauty into the cup.

At the end of the session, Ryan spoke with reference to this verse: ‘What comes out of your mouth is a reflection of what is in your heart’.

‘Now’, he said to the boys, ‘all of you have to drink what you’ve put in the cup’.

Imagine if all of us had to drink our words!

But the opposite is also true. If our words and thoughts, the matters of the heart, are a reflection of Paul’s words in Philippians 4:8, ‘… if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things!’, then we understand the heart is clean.

God bless your hearts and the things you say.

***Heavenly Father, thank you for the beautiful things of the heart, for pure love for you and others. Guide my thoughts and words as I live so that others may hear good words and glorify Jesus. Amen.***

Monday 17 August 2020

# Lasting legacy

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**‘As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,’ declares the LORD, ‘so will your name and descendant endure’ (Isaiah 66:22).**

Read Isaiah 66:18–22

Before COVID-19 restrictions, a young family purchased aeroplane tickets to fly to Canada for an eight-week holiday. It was the trip of a lifetime – they had been saving their dollars for years. Every week, the family would sit down to dream about the trip. They talked about their excitement for spending this family time together.

Then, the smallest of things became the biggest of things. A virus.

Imagine being the father of young children and husband to a loving wife and having to sit down with them one afternoon in March and say, ‘You know the thing we’d always dreamed of? Well …’

It’s a prophetic message, ‘That thing you always thought would be, well … it’s going to be vastly different’. Thus it was for Isaiah who had to tell the Israelites that not only would their monarchy be torn down, but so would their temple. For 39 chapters, Isaiah had to be the bringer of bad news.

Finally, Isaiah gets to speak about the hope of better things.

'Arise, shine for your light has come and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the people, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory will appear over you' (Isaiah 60:1,2).

Here is the promise that God will create something new – new heavens and earth. This will be different and beyond human expectations, yet the light of God will overcome the darkness, and all people will be drawn to the light. This is God’s lasting legacy.

What things have you missed out on during these times? What new things are you hoping for?

***Be gracious, Father in heaven, that I might see your light shining in the distance. Let your light shine upon my face. Whatever you are creating, help me to be grateful. Amen.***

Tuesday 18 August 2020

# A bigger table

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**If, then, God gave [the Gentiles] the same gift that he also gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, how could I possibly hinder God? (Acts 11:17)**

Read Acts 11:1–18

I vividly remember the ringing of the phone.

It was annoying because I was young and hungry. On the table in front of us was the holiday turkey, the potatoes, and all the trimmings. The smell made us salivate, and all that I wanted to do was dig in.

But the phone interrupted our hunger. It was the fire department, and a local house had caught on fire. My grandfather and my uncle were volunteer firefighters; thus, they were called into action even though dinner was on the table.

So, we waited, staring at the food, hoping that they’d hurry up. And then the phone rang again. This time it was my grandfather. My grandma’s face was serious. She nodded a few times and then said, ‘Well, bring them over. There’s plenty to eat and plenty of room’.

She cradled the phone and then announced to everyone that Grandpa and Uncle Dale were bringing home the family whose house had just burned. I looked at the table, stacked with food, but already stuffed with chairs and I thought, There’s no room for anyone else.

Almost as if reading my thoughts, Grandma said, ‘It’s alright, everyone, there’s always more room at the table’.

So it was for the first believers in Christ. The feast had been served. All the good gifts of heaven are displayed before the Jewish Christians who wanted to keep the meal for themselves. God had another thing in mind:

There is always more room at my table.

God’s welcome to the meal, which is a foretaste of the feast to come, is open to all people regardless of past or even present.

How have you felt God’s grace opened to you?

***Thank you, Jesus, for giving me eyes to see a grace larger than I could have ever imagined. Help me enjoy the gift. Amen.***

Wednesday 19 August 2020

# An immense gift

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48).**

Read Acts 13:42–49

I was born in a set of triplets. I have an identical twin brother and a fraternal sister. As I was growing up, it was always interesting at Christmas and birthdays to see what we would receive as gifts. In some ways, my sister was lucky because she always received different gifts than Ryan and me. For the two of us, it was always a race to open our presents the fastest because we knew that what one got, so would the other. Gift givers didn’t want to show favouritism, obviously.

I have to admit, there were times when I received a present, and I wished that Ryan wouldn’t have gotten the same thing also. It feels kind of strange to admit that, but sometimes you want all the good stuff for yourself.

So it seemed for Paul and Barnabas. God’s chosen people, the Jews and converts to Judaism, believed that they were receivers of God’s good gift of eternal life, but they didn’t want to share it with the Gentiles. It seemed as if they believed there was a scarcity to God’s mercy, goodness and grace.

There can be times when this skewed belief still happens – denominations can believe that they have a monopoly on God’s mercy, goodness and grace. Sometimes, without intending, others are turned away because we just want to have the good stuff for ourselves.

Thankfully, God’s love is not scarce. It is overfilling, overflowing and overwhelming. We couldn’t capture it all even if we wanted to, which is why the Gentiles experienced the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is why we experience the power of the Holy Spirit.

In what way have you experienced the immense gift of the Holy Spirit today?

***As far as gifts go, God, you have outdone yourself. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, you revealed salvation to me by the power of the Holy Spirit. Help me to open the truth of that gift today. Amen.***

Thursday 20 August 2020

# A prayer for leaders

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for everyone (1 Timothy 2:1).**

Read 1 Timothy 2:1–7

Paul has an amazing relationship with a young leader in the early church. We read how much he appreciates him as his ‘true son in the faith’. Taking him under his wing, Paul urges Timothy to prioritise certain expressions of faith, especially these four things:

Petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving – this is first and foremost in Paul’s mind for Timothy.

Petition for all those who are in authority.
Pray for all those in authority.
Offer intercessions for those in authority.
Give thanks for those in authority.

I have to be honest with you. This is really hard. I usually pray for myself and those closest to me. I tend to let God know I’ve got a checklist of people I want him to take care of. Every once in awhile, though, my prayers might give a cursory acknowledgement to governments and other leaders, but intercessions? Petitions? Thanksgiving?

Guilty as charged, Your Honour.

But here is the important part and what I think Paul is getting at. When we pray for all those in authority, we can expect that tranquillity and peace, as well as that godliness and dignity for all humans, might follow.

Dear reader, my true sister and brother in the faith, may grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord be with you.

***Heavenly Father and Lord Jesus Christ, I want to pray on behalf of our Australian government, that they might work together for the good of all people. I pray for them, that you protect them from the evil one and that they experience your goodness. I pray for our leaders that they work as one to battle the fear and separation of disease and strife. I thank you, Jesus Christ, for those who have been elected. Bless them today. Amen.***

Friday 21 August 2020

# Getting carried away

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**[The angel] carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God (Revelation 21:10).**

Read Revelation 21:10,22–25

‘Don’t get carried away.’

This phrase seems to always be used when something exciting is about to occur, whether playing a game, doing a hobby, shopping or any number of things that you enjoy. The caution is to keep my feet on the ground – be realistic. It’s like when I told my wife that I was pretty sure that my football team, the Fremantle Dockers, was going to win the Grand Final this year – she said, ‘Don’t get carried away’.

To be carried away means to go well above and beyond what can logically be expected or hoped for. In Revelation, John (literally) gets carried away to be shown a vision of what heaven is going to be like. How would you like to get carried away by that? Have you ever wondered to yourself what this is going to look like?

In the city that descends, John gets carried away by the vision of Jerusalem without a temple. Think about how strange this must be for him. There is no building, because ‘the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the lamb is its lamp’ (Revelation 21:22b,23).

When that great, glorious, and brilliant day arrives, and the world is restored again to its perfection, we’ll get carried away that we won’t be going to a church building and we won’t even need the sun to guide our way – because this function is fulfilled by God through the Lamb.

What images come to mind when you think of this?

***Carry me away, Heavenly Father, to see a vision of the perfect future you have in store for me and all who belong to you. Help me to feel the expectation and excitement as I wait for this day. Amen.***

Saturday 22 August 2020

# A heart full of thanks

by Pastor Reid Matthias

**I will ... praise your name for your unfailing love and your faithfulness (Psalm 138:2a).**

Read Psalm 138

It’s quite easy to complain, isn’t it?

Standing in the line at the supermarket, I happened to overhear two people having a real chinwag about all the things that were wrong in their lives. As we moved forward towards the checkout, I found myself pondering whether voicing their disappointment about life actually made them happier. Or did it, in fact, hinder them from experiencing joy?

In the psalm, David praises God’s name for his unfailing love and faithfulness and God’s reminder that God’s promise is above everything else. Even though life did not always turn out as he wished, David gives thanks, sings praise and bows down to the Holy One who is faithful.

So what can we think about? Where do we find the thought pathways to a thankful heart?

The Apostle Paul gives us a way. ‘Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Don’t be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Finally … whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.’

Neither David nor Paul are being naïve about the struggles that occur in life, but a thankful heart lifts us above to experience the joy of God’s promise in Christ Jesus.

What things do you express to your friends in the shopping line?

***Thank you, Son of God, for helping me to see the things of life that give me joy. For my family, friends, life and breath, thank you. Amen.***

Sunday 23 August 2020

# Seeing Jesus

by Ruth Olsen

### ‘Who do you say that I am?’ (Matthew 16:15)

Read Matthew 16:13–20

Jesus and his disciples had been travelling in the country regions. They were in a remote area near the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 15). There the disciples had seen the seven loaves and a few small fish that Jesus had blessed and miraculously multiply as the disciples distributed them to the crowd.

Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus, asking for ‘a sign from heaven’. Jesus then warned the disciples to be discerning of the ‘yeast’ (teaching) of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:1–12), and they came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, north of the Sea of Galilee – observing, learning, struggling to understand, asking questions along the way.

Here Jesus asked the disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They gave various replies. ‘But what about you? Who do you say I am?’ And Jesus said Peter’s response was revealed by his Father in heaven, not from people.

Who do you say that Jesus is? Have you been in conversation about your walk with Jesus and heard yourself say something new and significant about that? You recognise you didn’t think that up; it was given and revealed to you as you were speaking it. Like what happened to Peter!

Like those first disciples, there’s so much for us to learn to walk in, exercising faith in using the keys of the kingdom of heaven to change things here on earth as we bind and loose, in the authority Jesus gives us, for God’s kingdom purposes. As with Peter, though, it’s not in our own strength but by the Holy Spirit teaching and training us (Zechariah 4:6; John 14:25–27; 16:12–15).

**Holy Spirit, open the eyes of our hearts … to see Jesus more clearly!**