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**Sunday 18 September 2022 to Sunday 25 September 2022**

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Sunday 18 September 2022

# Use what you have wisely

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings (Luke 16:9).**

Read Luke 16:1–13

When you first encounter this parable, you may think that Jesus is promoting unethical business practices. However, this parable is akin to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament and is used to illustrate a particular point that Jesus is making.

Some have suggested that the shrewd manager removes the interest charged on each invoice – or reduces the invoice to a fair price – as Israel had been commanded to not charge each other interest and be fair in their business practices. Thus, the master would not be able to be too harsh with the manager as that would reveal too much about his own business practices. Whether this is the case or not, it is the shrewdness that Jesus wants us to ponder.

We can easily fall into the trap of worshipping (or at least paying too much attention to) money and all the ‘stuff’ it can buy. Jesus is challenging us on this. We cannot serve both God and our ‘stuff’. Jesus’ proposed solution is for us to be smart and find ways we can use our money and our stuff to help others. Not so that we earn our way into God’s kingdom, but because through him, we are already God’s children.

Are there ways in which you could better use your money? Have you been blessed with wonderful assets that could be used to help others and thus gain friends for the gospel? Often you can do even more by combining with others – so what ways can you, a group of Christians, wisely use your stuff?

**Heavenly Father, thank you for the many blessings you have given me. Help me, through your Holy Spirit, to be wise and generous with it all. Keep reminding me that the things of this world will pass away, but all you have given me through your Son will remain forever. In his mighty name, I pray. Amen.**

Glenn Crouch was born in Brisbane and was baptised in the Methodist Church. He married Karen in a Reformed Baptist Church, and they moved to Kalgoorlie in Western Australia 37 years ago, where Glenn worked as a lecturer in computing. After serving as a Baptist pastor, Glenn joined the Lutheran Church with Karen in 1995. Glenn served as a lay preacher, which led to him becoming a Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP), and he recently transitioned to General Ministry Pastor (GMP). Glenn still lives in Kalgoorlie-Boulder with Karen, where they have raised two boys.

Monday 19 September 2022

# Justice requires wisdom

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**… they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice (1 Kings 3:28b).**

Read 1 Kings 3:16–28

We often mistakenly equate wisdom and knowledge. Of course, knowledge is very valuable and useful, but just because you know a lot, it doesn’t mean you make good decisions. Wisdom in Scripture refers to practical skills (including decision-making) that lead to living a life that glorifies God. This includes making decisions that promote justice.

In our reading, we see Solomon has no knowledge about who the true mother is, so he devises a test to discover the truth. We may gasp in horror at his proposal, as surely most did within Solomon’s court. This was not something that Israel’s king should propose! But without shedding a drop of blood, Solomon discovers who the mother really is, and she is reunited with her child.

How do you fare when it comes to making wise decisions? How much thought do you give when posting a social media post or sending an email? Do you consider whether some item you want to share is actually true and what effect it may have on those who read or hear it?

I know there are times when my decisions have lacked wisdom. I am so thankful that our Lord Jesus died for all my sins and that through my baptism, I can receive forgiveness – not just today, but every day! Forgiveness is available not only when we make poor decisions but also when we don’t listen to wise advice.

**Almighty God, please forgive me for the thoughtless ways I have acted or spoken. Through your Holy Spirit, grant me your wisdom so that I make good decisions and that my words and deeds glorify your name. I ask this through your precious Son. Amen.**

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Tuesday 20 September 2022

# Wisdom includes promoting justice

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice (Proverbs 6:8).**

Read Proverbs 16:1–9

Proverbs is a fascinating book, and I hope you enjoy reading each of the verses today. Yesterday, I pointed out that in Scripture, wisdom is about practical skills that lead to a life that glorifies God. Today’s reading addresses: proper use of speech (verse 1); right motives (verse 2); God-driven plans (verse 3); God is in control (verse 4); don’t be proud (verse 5); be loving and faithful (verse 6); peace-making (verse 7); avoid injustice (verse 8); the Lord is in control (verse 9). As you can see, this is good practical advice!

Let’s have a closer look at verse 8. Our materialistic society is very much about the accumulation of ‘stuff’. One could argue that many have the view that the one with the most stuff wins. Sadly, we can fall into this way of thinking as well. This verse warns us that we need to examine how we make our money and get our stuff. If we make gains by disadvantaging others or taking advantage of their misfortune, we need to rethink things. Justice is not just something we expect the government and the courts to look after. Remember Micah 6:8 – we, as God’s people, should act justly.

It is also good to remember Zacchaeus (Luke 19) and that after his encounter with Jesus, he started to put things right. Are there any areas in which you have not acted justly? Are there ways in which you can put things right? Also think about the financial opportunities you may have, and see how verse 8 applies. It is better to only have a little and to show kindness and generosity.

**Lord of all Creation, you have richly blessed me. Thank you for all that you have given me. Help me to be generous with my bounty and act justly to all who I encounter. Amen.**

Wednesday 21 September 2022

# Where do you store your treasure?

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:21).**

Read Matthew 6:19–34

Anxiety is a major problem in our society. This is when the stress and anxious feelings about a situation don’t go away. Beyond Blue informs us that anxiety is the most common mental health condition in Australia and that, in any year, over two million Australians experience anxiety. Before going further, I would encourage you, if you do struggle with anxiety, to talk to someone you trust – maybe your pastor and/or health professional about it.

In our passage today, which is from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about some of the things his listeners would worry about. These can often be the same for us. It is not good when you are uncertain how you will feed your family, pay the rent or mortgage, or afford your child’s school excursion etc. I know that I have had times where such concerns have caused me to lose sleep and start to panic.

Jesus encourages us to change our priorities and make following him the priority, where we will learn about the Father and his commands. He is not saying that the problems will disappear or that the concerns above don’t matter, but we don’t have to face things alone. Our Father in Heaven loves and cares for us and is with us as we go through our struggles. As we focus more on Jesus, we find our perspective changes, and our burden is lighter.

So, where do your priorities lie? Where do you store your treasure?

**God of my salvation, fill me afresh with your Holy Spirit so that I come to you with my cares and worries. Help me see how much you love me, and grant me the reassurance that you are always with me. In Jesus’ mighty name, I pray. Amen.**

Thursday 22 September 2022

# Share your blessings with one another

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all (Acts 4:33b).**

Read Acts 4:32–37

I often find myself asking ‘Why can’t all our congregations be like the ones described in this passage?’ Luke, however, continues in Acts 5 to show that even in those early days, the ideal situation did not last for long. Sadly, sin is still present. It is also worth noting that the generosity and sharing described are not being commanded but rather that they flowed from God’s grace within them. Many commentators suggest that the properties they were selling were out of their abundance since if everyone sold their homes and farms, where would they live, and how would they eat?

We need to know our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, better. We also need to see more clearly all our Heavenly Father has done for us through him. We need to listen better to the Holy Spirit, who we received in our baptism. Then God’s grace will flow through us and affect those around us. We will see that our possessions are gifts from God to use for blessing those around us, as well as ourselves. In fact, we may find that they are even more of a blessing to us when we use them (including giving them away) to help others!

So much blessing awaits when we, as congregations, care for one another. Especially when we care in ways that are inconvenient. Are we willing to care even if it hurts our pockets, dreams or plans? How much more can we show God’s love to our families, workplaces and communities if, in our churches, we go out of our way to care for one another?

**Gracious God, please create in me a heart that genuinely cares for those in my congregation and community. Open my eyes to see ways I can serve them. Help me be generous and make me more aware of how generous you are to me, especially through your dear Son, in whose name I pray. Amen.**

Friday 23 September 2022

# Don’t be deceived!

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father (James 1:17a).**

Read James 1:9–18

I appreciate how some commentators describe the Book of James as similar to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. In today’s reading, James gives us some practical advice on living lives that glorify God.

He urges us to persevere in our faith as we endure trials and struggles. He warns of the danger of giving in to temptation and how our desires lead to sin, and that sin leads to death. Putting our trust in God when we are struggling doesn’t mean our problems disappear, but rather that our Lord God goes through the tough times with us. As we look back to all that is promised in our baptism, we can receive forgiveness and restore our focus on the cross – on all our Lord Jesus has done. In fact, the tough periods can strengthen our relationship with our Father, thus, increasing our ability to cope with all that comes our way.

The world wants to deceive us into listening to its message over the gospel, but don’t be fooled. Real success and real treasure come from putting your trust in God. The world wants to convince us that it has all the good stuff, but real blessings come from our Heavenly Father.

Are you struggling in some way? Put your trust in Jesus. He understands. Your Heavenly Father loves you. Don’t listen to the world; listen to the Holy Spirit as he guides you through Scripture, prayer and the words and deeds of your fellow Christians.

**Merciful Father, I ask that through your Holy Spirit, you will keep me focused on all that your dear Son has done for me. I ask for your comfort for all those I know who are struggling. Show me how I can help them. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.**

Saturday 24 September 2022

# Praise the Lord!

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God (Psalm 146:5).**

Read Psalm 146

Wisdom is not just something we find in the Book of Proverbs because, as you can see, there is wisdom in today’s psalm. The Book of Psalms concludes with five psalms that are all about praising God, and this is the first of them. It’s well worth reading all five psalms (Psalm 146 through to Psalm 150) in one sitting – don’t worry, they are not long ones!

The psalmist warns us about putting our trust in our human leaders. Like ourselves, they are sinners. They can’t save themselves, let alone us. However, our Lord God is the Creator of the universe. He made everything we can see (and even the things we can’t see). Add to that our Lord God has a long reputation for saving and healing people, justice, and caring for the outcast. So, it makes sense to put our trust in God!

In whom, or in what, do I put my trust? This is a question we need to ask ourselves daily. We are good at saying we trust our Lord God, but do our actions match our words? When we rely on our own strength, we will keep creating new idols in which we put our faith. Let this psalm awaken in each of us the need to truly praise the Lord. As we sing our praise, then our hearts and minds will follow. As we praise God, the foolishness of whatever we have substituted for him will be revealed. Real blessings come from putting your hope in the Lord our God.

**Holy God, show me what I am putting in your place. Grant me your strength to turn away from the things of this world and put my trust in you. Praise the Lord. Amen.**

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.