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**Sunday 21 January 2024 to**

**Sunday 28 January 2024**

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Sunday 21 January 2024

**Let’s get going**

by Pastor Tim Klein

***The time has come! God's kingdom will soon be here. Turn back to God and believe the good news (John 1:15)!***

Read [Mark 1:14–20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3A14-20+&version=NRSVUE)

The older I get, the more aware I am of the need to not just believe but also share the good news. I wonder, is that true for you too?

For around 30 years, Jesus had grown up and participated in life as a son, brother, fellow worshipper and member of his local community. He lived and learned all about life and faith as a person. Inevitably, Jesus listened to and observed how life was for all those people he encountered. He also experienced and learned about relating to other people. He grew in his knowledge and understanding: Jesus grew in wisdom, stature and favour with God and all the people (Luke 2:52).

All this, so far, was Jesus’ time of preparation. When ‘the word took on flesh’, it meant Jesus had to be fully prepared as a person for his task as God’s Son. That meant knowing and understanding what it meant to be human – as well as what it meant to be the Messiah and Saviour for all humankind.

Finally, the preparation was over! It’s time! Time to get going. Time to put faith, knowledge, experience and wisdom to work. Time to focus now on telling the world about the imminent presence of God’s heavenly kingdom.

So, Jesus goes about choosing his team and getting on with his life’s mission.

You and me – we are part of his team. We share his mission to bring the good news of the kingdom of God into the hearts and lives of all people around us.

Our preparation time is over. Now, it’s time for us, like Jesus, to get going and share the good news of Jesus.

***Heavenly Father, we praise and thank you for those who shared your kingdom with us. Thank you, too, for preparing us for your purposes. Use us. Use me now to announce the imminent presence of your kingdom. Amen.***

*Tim has served as a pastor for over 30 years in Australia and New Zealand and is currently at Faith Warradale in South Australia. Husband to his wife, father of three and grandfather of more than nine. Tim says he is living in hope. He enjoys gardening (especially his orchard of over 60 trees, succulents and flowering plants), making music (he loves to sing), beekeeping and taking photos.*

Monday 22 January 2024

**If you have ears, listen!**

by Pastor Tim Klein

***If you have ears, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 3:6).***

Read [Revelation 3:1–6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+3%3A1-6++&version=NRSVUE)

Today, and for the next two days, you will read this admonition from the Lord in Revelation: ‘If you have ears, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.’

If you are a parent or grandparent, or even when observing children generally, you will be very aware of their capacity to listen to or ignore your voice. We have good reasons to call out to our children. It might be a word of advice, instruction, or even a warning. Sometimes, my own children were not quick to listen and pay attention. One of my three children would sometimes respond, ‘I know’. Another was sometimes quick to debate with us. The other sometimes pretended deafness. We see similar traits in our grandchildren and others – even in grown-up children.

It's important to listen to what the Spirit is saying to us in the church today. Today’s word contains both a warning and a promise. We need to listen and pay attention to both.

Here’s the warning: Sometimes, we don’t fully listen to the Lord. We might pretend to listen. We might even give lip service to what he asks of us. But sadly, the less we listen, the weaker in faith we become and the more likely we are to succumb to sin. We need to listen and hold fully to what he has taught us. It’s truth. It’s good for us. It blesses us.

Here’s the promise: Those who listen and follow the Lord’s word will be blessed to ‘wear white clothes’ – clothes that are clean. We will be blessed to walk with him, and our names will remain in the Book of Life.

In our relationship with the Lord, sometimes we can be like little kids – either listening or not listening to him. It’s far better for us to listen and pay attention, truly be his followers, listen to his word and live.

***Dear Heavenly Father. We thank you for the gift of ears and that we can listen to your voice and follow you and what you say. Thank you for your life-giving word of forgiveness: of mercy and grace. Keep us listening for Jesus’ sake. Amen.***

Tuesday 23 January 2024

**Holding on with faith**

by Pastor Tim Klein

***I am coming soon. So hold firmly to what you have, and no one will take away the crown you will be given as your reward (Revelation 3:11).***

Read [Revelation 3:7–13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+3%3A7-13&version=NRSVUE)

Again, comes this invitation to listen. So, what might we hear today from the Lord?

At an aged-care service this week, we reflected on Isaiah 60, focusing on verse 1: ‘Jerusalem, stand up! Shine! Your new day is dawning.’

Have you heard the phrase ‘realised eschatology’? It literally says, ‘end time things are being realised right in the here and now’. If you are a baptised child of God, then you, with me and other baptised people, are in God’s kingdom right now! That’s built into Isaiah 60:1!

We live in two kingdoms: the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light! Both are spoken of in Isaiah 60 (and other places in the word). ‘The earth and its people are covered with darkness, but the glory of the Lord is shining upon you’ (Isaiah 60:2).

As baptised children of the Lord, we have been gifted with a rock-solid promise – life in the kingdom of God. It’s our crown – the crown of eternal life. Here. As we listen, we are told to hold firmly to what we have. If we want that promise to be fully realised in the eternal kingdom of God, then we need to hold on to it – firmly.

What can we do then? Let faith be our daily practice; read and reflect on the word of God and listen to what he is saying. Allow his Spirit to guide our daily lives: our decisions, hopes and dreams. Let the Spirit focus our hearts and minds on Christ – our ultimate reward. In faith, do as Isaiah says: stand up and shine in this new dawning day to which we belong. Smile into the dark places you encounter. Share with people in darkness – give them some light. Serve in those dark places, just as the Lord has done for you and me. Finally, sing to the Lord a new song.

***Lord, we know well the whelming darkness all around and even within us. Give us your strength to hold onto the promised crown of life. We thank and praise you for shining your light with mercy and forgiveness into our hearts. Use us now to shine your light into the darkness around us. Amen.***

Wednesday 24 January 2024

**Still listening?**

by Pastor Tim Klein

***Listen! I am standing and knocking at your door. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and we will eat together (Revelation 3:20).***

Read [Revelation 3:14–22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+3%3A14-22&version=NRSVUE)

My congregation loves to sing ‘Shine Jesus Shine’ (by Graham Kendrick). There is a great line in the chorus: ‘Set out hearts on fire’. However, like remaining seated to sing ‘Stand up for Jesus’, I suspect our hearts are not always all that ‘fired up’ as we sing to the Lord: ‘Set our hearts on fire.’

As a pastor, my heart is gladdened when we (including me) respond with grace, mercy and generosity to the needs of other people. On the other hand, my heart is sometimes saddened when people (myself included) seem to ignore others or treat them poorly. That’s our humanity – our sin – we pick and choose. We can be both hot and cold for the Lord at the same time.

And that’s why we need to listen up today to Revelation 3:15,16 and take the Lord seriously when he says it:

I know everything you have done, and you are not cold or hot. I wish you were either one or the other. But since you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of my mouth.

Do you want to be that lukewarm person, spat out from the Lord’s mouth? I don’t. Here’s our conundrum, which Paul expresses well in Romans 7:21–23:

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

Thank God that not only is he serious about how he wants us to live, but he is also serious about saving us: ‘But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us’ (Romans 5:8).

Another thing we love in our congregation is the Lord’s invitation to dine with him at the table. We gather, we confess, we are forgiven. He invites us to the table, and we eat together! It’s realised eschatology at work. Hallelujah! We are in the kingdom now!

***Dear Lord and Saviour, thank you for your grace that forgives us lukewarm people. Keep working in us – don’t give up on us. Use us in your mission to reach beyond our self-imposed limitations to seek the lost, the lonely and the least. Amen.***

Thursday 25 January 2024

**Perpetual worship**

by Pastor Tim Klein

***Day and night they never stopped singing, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, the all-powerful God, who was and is and is coming’ (Revelation 4:8).***

Read [Revelation 4:1–8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+4%3A1-8&version=NRSVUE)

As teenagers in Perth, we would gather every Friday night at one of our group homes for fellowship and worship. We would read the word and reflect on it. We would pray and sing ... sometimes well into the early hours, till sleep won us over.

So when I read and try to imagine the vision John was given about the incredible scene that opened up to him and the living creatures around the throne of God who never stopped singing, I can only marvel at what is happening there. This is an extraordinary revelation and expression of the kingdom that waits for you and me.

But in the meantime, we are limited. So, what do we listen for here in these verses?

Perhaps our foretaste of heaven is to be reminded of the complete holiness and awesome reality of God’s glory as described in this revelation and to grow in worship. And that’s what God wants. He wants us to worship him – to acknowledge his majesty, to be in awe of him. He wants us to live our lives with this sense of the imminent presence of the Lord so that our lives – our whole lives – are acts of worship!

They sing it over and over again: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord, the all-powerful God, who was and is and is coming.’

They are describing and honouring our God – the maker of heaven and earth, our Redeemer, the one who gives us life every day – perpetually. Can we join with them so that our lives are truly perpetual lives of worship? I would like to hope for that. As a sinner, I know I fall down on the job – like those teenagers in Perth who fell asleep. But I know, too, that the Lord comes to me, forgives me, picks me up, and, with his Spirit, continues to inspire my life as an act of worship of our awesome God.

***Almighty God, our minds limit us. We cannot fully grasp the immensity of your holiness. Nevertheless, keep inspiring us as your people in everything we do so that our lives honour and worship you in every circumstance. Amen.***

Friday 26 January 2024

**He is worthy of our thanks**

by Pastor Tim Klein

***Our Lord and God, you are worthy to receive glory, honour, and power. You created all things, and by your decision they are and were created (Revelation 4:11).***

Read [Revelation 4:9 – 5:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+4%3A9+%E2%80%93+5%3A5&version=NRSVUE)

It’s Australia Day today. It’s the day we are invited to celebrate all things Australian – slap a prawn on the barbie and slip a lamb roast in the oven. We might go watch a game of tennis or possibly cricket. We might even attend an Australia Day ceremony to witness and congratulate new citizens as they make their commitment to Australian citizenship.

I wrote a song for the Berri Barmera Council Australia Day ceremony that had this chorus:

We are Australians – Australian
Working and playing in this great, great land
We are Australians – Australian
Loving life in Australia.

What a privilege it is to live in Australia.

Let's turn back to the aged-care service I mentioned earlier in the week. When it came time for prayer, I asked what we might include in our prayers. We had quite a conversation about how blessed we are to live in Australia. In our prayer, we gave thanks to the Lord for the freedom and blessings of life in Australia.

But even as we celebrate our land, Australia, and thank God for it, living creatures praise the Lord around his throne – perpetually.

Yes, it is good for us to celebrate our nation and thank the Lord for all the blessings we enjoy and appreciate. We should never take for granted the freedoms and abundance available to us. But more importantly, we should always remember that all we have, every blessing, and every good thing we enjoy in this place is there by God’s grace. As we read in Revelation 4:10, ‘You created all things, and by your decision they are and were created’.

And so we join with the living creature and elders around the throne of God in giving him who created all things: glory, honour and power.

***Dear creating and life-giving Father. We thank and praise you with angels, archangels and all the company of heaven for who you are: our gracious and redeeming God. Keep us always thankful to you for all we enjoy in this life. Keep us ever hopeful for the life with you to come. Amen.***

Saturday 27 January 2024

**Worthy of our praise**

by Pastor Tim Klein

***The Lord has done many wonderful things (Psalm 111:2)!***

Read [Psalm 111](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+111&version=NRSVUE)

Here’s a thought. If you were to set about writing a list of the things for which you are thankful, where would you start? Where would it end?

Would it be to follow the chronology of your life? Perhaps start with the gift of life that began as the Lord knitted you together in your mother’s womb (Psalm 139). Moving on to that moment when the Lord adopted you into his family through the gift of holy baptism (Matthew 28)?

Or what about when you stood before the Lord, family and friends gathered around and made your vows to your life partner? ‘That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh’ (Genesis 2:24).

And then, if blessed with children, when you held your first child in your arms and marvelled at the amazing creativity of God – ‘Look, she even has your nose!’

Or maybe there is that ever-recurring time when you stand penitent before the Lord, confessing your sin, asking for mercy. Then, to hear those words from the Lord: ‘I forgive you all your sin’. ‘Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord’ *(*Romans 7:25).

Or to hear the Lord saying in the liturgy of Holy Communion: ‘Take and eat, take and drink, my body, my blood – given and shed for the forgiveness of sins.’

Where next? Start thinking about the amazing gifts in creation: ‘the moon and stars that the Lord has set in place’ (Psalm 8:3).

There is no end to the things we have reason to thank and praise the Lord for. Perhaps you might invite someone to explore the things you are thankful for – at home, at a café, in fellowship after worship.

Truly, the Lord has done many wonderful things! Let’s be thankful. He is worthy of our praise.

***O Lord, we praise you for all you have created and your ongoing creation of new things. Keep us mindful that all of creation is your doing. Keep us always thanking and praising you. Amen.***

Sunday 28 January 2024

**A new teaching**

by Tatiana Overduin

***He taught them as one who had authority (Mark 1:22).***

Read [Mark 1:21–28](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3A21-28&version=NRSVUE)

Today’s devotional reading begins with an account of Jesus in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. We read that the people were amazed because he taught differently to the teachers of the law: Jesus taught with authority. The people present at that event identified something very different, something new. ‘What is this?’ they exclaimed. ‘A new teaching … with authority!’ Just as Jesus’ teaching was clearly different for the people then, so Jesus’ teaching should be clearly different for us today. Jesus’ teaching is distinctive from the world’s teaching, and that is what makes it always refreshingly new. We can take great comfort in trusting that Jesus has all authority over heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18–20).

Many people assume authority over others: parents, pastors, teachers, employers, prime ministers, police officers, and the list continues. During the COVID pandemic, ordinary people were also given authority over others for a time, and perhaps you experienced that some could be quite insistent! With authority comes power, and human nature loves power and having control over others. All too often, we witness this power misused sinfully. However, genuine authority is different from just having a controlling power over others. Real authority comes with the responsibility to provide support, encouragement and safety for others; it isn’t an abusive power. Jesus’ authority is never abusive or sinful. Perhaps that is why the people thought it was new, as the Pharisees were renowned for being oppressive.

Having met people who have come to faith as adults, what is often obvious is how they begin to live in a completely new way: with a new sense of freedom and an assuredness of God’s forgiveness through the cross. They live with a deep, fulfilling peace. Living faithfully in God’s word does provide a new way of living because we live as repentant, forgiven, saved people despite having to live in opposition to what the world teaches. God’s grace offered to us through the Scriptures, gifted by the Holy Spirit, is a new way to live with forgiveness, love and kindness in all our relationships. Jesus’ authority continues to be new for us all, even today, every morning because despite our sinful human nature, we can look to his complete authority. Jesus provides the perfect way.

***Lord Jesus, we are forever thankful that you have authority over all things. Amen.***

*Tatiana is married to Jim, and they live in Largs North, a seaside location in Adelaide. They have two adult children and six grandchildren, who are a wonderful blessing to them both. Tatiana teaches full-time as an English, History and Religion teacher; she gained a Bachelor of Arts in Theology from Australian Lutheran College in 1996, and in her spare time, she enjoys knitting, gardening, singing for church, writing and swimming. Her home congregation is Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Adelaide.*