

Sunday July 25, 2021

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

Let us worship God. As the Psalmist says in Psalm 42, *“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? ³My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’ ⁴These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng. ⁵Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.”*

Let us pray...

Dear Lord and Father we come to you today with the aim of putting our hope in you. This week we have put our hope in lots of things. In a bus timetable, in our own abilities, in our family, in our government but none of those things are strong as you, as good as you, as compassionate as you or as powerful as you. We know that we should have put our hope in you in the first case but we are often wilful and independent and stubborn. And we are slow learners.

But today we come to you, we look to you, we trust in you. We trust in you for the forgiveness of sin. We look to you and your word for the guidance we need in our lives. And we come to you, as we are, hoping that you will send us out renewed and refreshed and reinvigorated, and ready to serve you.

So be with us in our prayers, in our songs, in our readings and in the preaching of your word. Lift us up if we are down. Settle if we are trouble. Challenge us if we are complacent. But most of all change and make us more like your son, the Lord Jesus. In whose name we pray, Amen.

Song – Sooner count the stars

[Sooner Count the Stars \[Official Lyric Video\] - YouTube](#)

Bible Reading – Psalm 92 (NIV)

It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High, ²proclaiming your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night, ³to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp. ⁴For you make me glad by your deeds, LORD; I sing for joy at what your hands have done. ⁵How great are your works, LORD, how profound your thoughts! ⁶Senseless people do not know, fools do not understand, ⁷that though the wicked spring up like grass and all evildoers flourish, they will be destroyed forever. ⁸But you, LORD, are forever exalted. ⁹For surely your enemies, LORD, surely your enemies will perish; all evildoers will be scattered. ¹⁰You have exalted my horn like that of a wild ox; fine oils have been poured on me. ¹¹My eyes have seen the defeat of my adversaries; my ears have heard the rout of my wicked foes. ¹²The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; ¹³planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. ¹⁴They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, ¹⁵proclaiming, “The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.”

Announcements

Focus for July – Commitment. How do we show our commitment to those who are lost without Christ? It is easy for us to say that God will choose those who are his own but he has called us to sharing the Good News with all the nations and pray that God will open up the hearts of many. Here are a couple of suggestions

Pray for missionaries regularly – they will help keep your mind on the lost. Create a list of three people that you know that are not saved. Pray through that list every week. Listen and ask questions about what they believe. Look for opportunities to speak to them about Christ. Prayerfully support one of your friends and family as they seek to witness to their friends.

QR Codes. Thank you for all those who are using their QR codes to sign in. It really helps us confirm to the NSW government regulations. If you can't sign in by yourself, please speak to the people on the door about how we can help you out in the future.

Family of Origin. Anna Moss, the Women's Ministry Coordinator will be presenting for us on family systems therapy next Sunday on August 1 via ZOOM from 3-4:30pm. This time together will be a great way to see how our family of origin affects our thinking and our decision making. If you are interested in joining us our Facebook page will have the link or you could get it directly from Jo Barlow.

NO Church Picnic for TODAY. We hope to put it on later on the term when the COVID situation settles down.

Sick Leave – Stephen had an ACL reconstruction on Thursday @ Belmont Hospital. He will be on sick leave for at least the next week. Please contact Jon or one of the elders if you need any pastoral assistance.

Hunter Men's Convention. Saturday 11th September 8:30-3pm @ Grace Evangelical Church. Speaker: Simon Manchester. Topic Ezekiel (is God trying to say something to us) Cost \$30. The capacity is only 104 this year because of COVID restrictions so if you would like to come you will need to get in fast!

Invitation Service. On 29th August we are planning to have a series of invitation services, where we can invite our unsaved friends and family along to any one of our four services and they will hear a clear gospel message. So now is the time to start praying and thinking about who we might invite along?

Kids spot: Week 2 in our series in Revelation is from chapter 2, verses 1-7 and 12-17 where we will learn to be careful to know what is true and love what is true. The kids will be encouraged to be reading their Bibles everyday to know and love the truth of God's word to us. If your kids are not reading their Bibles everyday on their own or as a family, why not encourage them by starting today? Question of the week: Do you think you could spot someone who is twisting the truth or telling a lie about God? How could you make sure you get better at this?

Snow gums memory verse challenge for the week: All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Romans 3:23

Song – Grace Awaiting me

[Grace Awaiting Me - Emu Music | LYRIC VIDEO - YouTube](#)

Prayer Points for 25th July 2021

A Prayer on Psalm 108: "Save us and help us with your right hand, that those you love may be delivered". (Ps. 108:6). This psalm is a 'mash up' of Psalms 57 and 60. The point of both psalms is reinforced here. They start with the Lord's people under stress and in trouble; and end with a renewed assurance that with God we are given the victory. It is good for us to remember this as we pray. Sometimes our hearts are not 'steadfast', we are overcome by fear, doubts and tremblings. but let's look away from our own hearts to the Lord in whom we already have the victory!

Pray for Germany. Pray for a second reformation to make the Church culturally relevant and Biblically sound. Pray for a spiritual awakening among the predominantly lost youth. Pray for wisdom, compassion, and provision as the nation receives and assimilates historic numbers of migrants. Pray for flood affected regions of Germany. Pray that God would comfort those who have lost loved ones. And that the people would be kept from future floods.

Pray for Churches – The work of the Gospel goes on. Although Covid is serious, pray that the churches do not forget our main mission, to tell people the Good News of Jesus Christ. May we be bold and prayerful in this great commission we have been given.

Pray for people and families. Many households in Sydney will be struggling with the increased lockdown and restrictions. The daily diet of bad news will have a debilitating effect on the mental health of many people. The Federal government's decision to run with a 'shock' ad in order to terrify people into obedience may well work, but it may also have a negative effect.

Family Matters – Gideons (Bill Pope)

Bible Reading – Matthew 4:1-11 (NIV)

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." ⁴Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" ⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" ⁷Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. ⁹"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." ¹⁰Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" ¹¹Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Sermon – Examination (Paul B)

In 37AD, Tiberius Caesar, the emperor of the Roman Empire, died. His adopted nephew, Gaius, or Caligula as he is known, took over as emperor and he was seen as the great hope of the empire, the man to lead Rome into a greater future than what they had had to endure under Tiberius. And for the first 6 months of his rule had seemed to usher in a new era.

However, as with much in life, it's not the good times which reveal your character but the testing times. So when, in September of 37AD Caligula gets sick and is near death, his true character is revealed. He somehow recovers, yet is a changed man and not for the better.

What Caligula realised as he lay suffering and near death was that he'd be doing it all wrong, what he thought about himself and his purpose was all wrong. He didn't need the Senate or anyone else. He was the most powerful person in the world, why should he pander to the needs of others? He came to realise that his title and his place in the empire gave him the right to self-indulge. And that's what he did. He ensured that all these people and institutions which existed in his empire were used to serve him and to increase his popularity.

So when he recovers he throws himself into a life of self-indulgence: for example he creates 2 massive 100 metre long party boats; he spends the equivalent of \$100 million on just one party; he put gems in the walls of his palace to show everything how wealthy he was. What Caligula's sickness and testing of his character had done was to reveal what he truly thought of himself and what he thought his role as emperor entitled him to have.

When we turn to Matthew 4, Matthew uses Jesus' temptation to reveal who Jesus thought he was and what he thought of his role as God's Son entitled him to him. Firstly, and very briefly, we need to put Matthew 4 in its context within the book of Matthew.

Context – Identification

I want to very quickly examine two passages in Matthew 2 and 3 which are revealing in outlining Matthew's view of Jesus in his book. In chapter 2, as we know, Jesus and his parents flee to Egypt because Herod the Great is trying to find him and kill him. And in verse 15 Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1 "Out of Egypt I called my son." In Hosea, the prophet is talking about God delivering the Israelites out of Egypt, yet interestingly here, Matthew applies that verse to Jesus himself. So from the beginning of his book, Matthew identifies Jesus as the new and true representative of Israel. Jesus is what Israel should have been, the faithful Son of God. And then in chapter 3 during Jesus' baptism, Jesus says in verse **15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness." Then John consented.**

Again, I don't want to get bogged down here with all that's going on in this verse, but Jesus is stating that he has come to fulfil "all righteousness", in other words, the righteous plan of his Father. And the reason he says this at his baptism is because it is through identification with sinners (those who need to repent of their sins) that Jesus will fulfil God's righteous plan.

Craig Keener: "Jesus' baptism, like his impending death, would be vicarious, embraced on behalf of others with whom the Father had called him to identify."

So by the time we get to chapter 4, Matthew has established with his reader the idea that Jesus is identified as the true Israel who follows his Father's righteous plan. But just like the Israelites after they leave Egypt, so too Jesus' faithfulness will be tested in the wilderness. Just how committed is he to God's righteous plan? So let's turn now to Matthew 4

Temptation 1: Self-Indulgence

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

The wilderness is not just the geographical setting for the story but is important for 2 reasons. One it was seen as the place inhabited by demons, as it was so physically lifeless that it must be spiritually lifeless. But also, the wilderness is also the place of Israel's greatest temptation and testing, as outlined by Moses in Deuteronomy 6-8. And that's the background to this section.

It's no coincidence that each quote from Jesus during the temptations is from Deuteronomy 6-8. So clearly Jesus has that in his mind as he is out there. In Deuteronomy 6-8, Moses is retelling the Israelites before his death of their testing in the wilderness, and how they failed to obey and trust God. But now the representative of Israel, the true Israel, is being tempted in the wilderness. How will he go? **3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."**

-The word "if" is crucial to understanding the whole passage. "If" here isn't Satan casting doubt on Jesus' Sonship or that he's unsure if Jesus is God's Son and is just looking for clarification - he's just a truth-seeker. What Satan is doing is that he is testing Jesus' meaning and understanding of his sonship, i.e. what does Jesus think his Sonship, his privileged place in God's Kingdom entail? What kind of Messiah and Son of God will he be? With all his power and authority here on earth, how is he going to use it?

-So, what's the temptation? Notice Satan isn't asking Jesus to possess anyone, to scare anyone, no people floating in the air - just make yourself a meal. What's wrong with that? You're hungry aren't you Jesus? It's not harming anyone, just make some bread. As far as great clashes between enemies go, it's a little underwhelming isn't it?

What Satan is tempting Jesus to do is to use his power, and his privileged place as God's Son, for himself, his own needs and comfort. You have the power to make your life more comfortable Jesus, so do it - use

your power for yourself. **Craig Keener: “The devil invites Jesus to abuse his power for personal ends rather than his Father’s purposes.”** Just have your best life now, look after number one.

4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

-The first of 3 quotes from Deuteronomy 6-8. Israel’s hunger in the desert was meant to teach them to trust God’s word over their present situation and they don’t – their hunger turns to anger which turns to disobedience. We use the term hangry – so hungry that your angry. Snickers had a whole advertising campaign based on it. Yet, here Jesus, the true Israel, will not let his very real hunger pains dictate his obedience level. How different that is from our experience. How often is our obedience to God’s word is reliant on our circumstances, how much sleep we’ve got, if we’ve had breakfast or our morning coffee, who we’re with at the time.

Yet, here is Jesus, at his physical limit (40 days is roughly how long you can go without food for), and his only company is Satan, yet he won’t compromise his obedience because that is not what his Sonship is about. He will not use his power for any reason other than what God has ordained him to do, even if it leads to suffering. If obedience to God leads to suffering, Jesus will still obey.

But Satan’s not so easily defeated. So Jesus thinks his Sonship is about choosing the life of suffering, just how devoted is he to that thought.

Temptation 2: Self-Promotion

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 “If you are the Son of God,” he said “throw yourself down. For it is written: “‘He will command his angels concerning you & they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone”

-This point of the temple is at a 100-metre drop. Therefore, Satan brings Jesus to this point and asks him to throw himself off in front of everyone for God will protect him.

-What is the temptation? How is doing an amazing and public display of his trust in God a temptation? What could be more amazing then seeing an angel save someone falling?

-Before we get to that, I want to focus in on Satan’s use of Psalm 91:11-12, because it really disturbs me. In the first temptation, Jesus states he is the kind of Son and Servant who clings to God’s word alone, even if it leads to suffering. Therefore, Satan will now turn to God’s word to tempt him. What is so disturbing for me about his use of Psalm 91 is that this Psalm is all about trusting in a powerful God, a God who is strong enough to protect you from anything. The Psalm finishes like this: ¹⁴ **“Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.**

You say you have some special relationship with God, Jesus. Well, prove it. Let everyone see God’s love for you by His protection of you. If God loves you, He will protect you, it’s in the Bible. The thing that disturbs me is that Satan’s understanding of the Psalm is not that wrong, he gets what the Psalmist is saying about God, but he misapplies it to hold God to ransom. Irenaeus of Lyons warned that - “Error never shows itself in its naked reality, in order not to be discovered. On the contrary, it dresses elegantly”.

So what’s the temptation? To jump off the temple and be saved by divine intervention would helped Jesus gain an incredible following. He would have been instantly popular, instantly recognisable, and instantly known as someone special to God. Therefore, if he did this, he wouldn’t have to choose this life of suffering he thinks his Father wants him to choose. He can build God’s kingdom through the spectacular,

not the obviously more difficult way of identifying with and suffering for sinful people. Satan is saying there's another way.

Yet, this type of miracle and the faith it inspires is not commended by Jesus. In John, Jesus repeatedly criticises people for having "faith" in him because they've seen him do some miracles. **John 2:23-24 "Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people"**. And then, when these same people with "faith" in Jesus come across a hard teaching of Jesus, they ditch him immediately.

Jesus' Sonship and mission is not to entertain people into the kingdom, or attract people through superficial tricks. No where is the more obvious than after his arrest, when Pilate sends him to Herod Antipas and Herod wants Jesus to perform a miracle because that would be entertaining. If Jesus performs a miracle for him, I have no doubt Herod would release him – no suffering and dying on a cross. But that's not what Jesus' mission is about.

7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Satan misunderstands God's intentions for Jesus. Jesus' Sonship is not an opportunity for self-promotion whilst presuming on God to always support this self-promotion. God isn't here to fulfil all your dreams. Just think about this for a moment: the Son of God, who is deserving of all honour and praise, and his power is limitless, willingly submits to his Father's plan, even if it means his popularity will be harmed.

-So Jesus won't win people into the kingdom through the spectacular, so Satan now targets another way for Jesus to fulfil his mission.

Temptation 3: Self-Preservation

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

-This is the hail Mary play by Satan. What's the temptation? Put simply, sidestep the cross Jesus. Avoid this life of suffering. Avoid a humiliating and public death. You don't want to gain your throne through population, ok then. You don't need to gain your throne, your honour on earth through suffering on a cross. That's not what a Son of God does. If your Father's plan involves suffering on a cross, my plan for you is pain-free. Just worship me. What a temptation! Now before we so easily dismiss this, just consider that our whole advertising and retail industry is aimed at making our lives pain-free, easier, more comfortable. This temptation is something that resonates with us in the 21st century. **10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"**

- In a way this verse sums up the whole section, the point of these temptations. Jesus' Sonship, his defining attribute, is obedience to his Father because His Father is deserving of all praise and worship.

Jesus will not use his authority and power for a life of self-indulgence, or use his power to gain popularity and self-promotion, or choose the easy way of self-preservation. The defining mark of his mission is his obedience to His Father who is worthy of all praise.

Application or Contemplation?

It's right about now that I am tempted to start the "application" part of this sermon. The "What can you practically take away from this" part. Most sermons on this passage go on about the importance of memorising verses from the Bible so, just like Jesus, when Satan and temptations come a-knocking we can throw this verse at him. You struggling with anger, learn this verse. Pornography, here's this verse.

Discouragement, have this verse. And here are 4 ways to best memorise key Bible verses and let's all make a promise to learn 3 verses a week.

And you might be all excited to do that for about a week and this time next week you'll be discouraged because you still got angry or discouraged or whatever because we missed the Jesus of the passage. Don't get me wrong, in an increasingly Biblically illiterate society and even church, memorising verses is important in your spiritual growth and fight. But I just don't think it's the point of this passage.

-The reason I don't think that's the point of this story is because this story is unique in the Gospels. Why? How do we know this story happened? Only Jesus could have told the disciples as there are no other eyewitnesses. So what we have here is what Jesus wanted his disciples and us to know about his temptation. And for me, there's no emphasis on Bible memorisation.

We're to react to this story the same way the disciples react after Jesus calms the storm. Jesus shows his great power and authority of the natural world, stunning his disciples and how do the disciples react? They don't gather around and Peter says "We've all got storms in our lives but with Jesus is our boat, we can smile at the storm. Ok, we all know the words. *With Christ in my vessel I can smile at the storm*". How do they react? WHO IS THIS? And that's meant to be our reaction to this story.

I think this story invites us to sit and contemplate the nature of the Son of God. And I don't mean we need to tick off things we've been taught about Jesus. Both God and human – tick. He's really kind – tick.

No. I mean have you recently thought deeply about the fact that even though all things were created through him, Jesus never used his power for selfish gain. That he chose to identify, not with the powerful or lovely people, but with the sinful and unloving. That he chose to obey His Father's plan even though it was the path of suffering. That obeying his Father was more important to him than being popular. That he didn't rely on superficial means, like crowd pleasing miracles, to spread the kingdom of God. Have you really contemplated these things. You see once you've thought about these things deeply, the application side of it comes naturally.

That's the challenge for us all, to contemplate on the person of Jesus Christ, the suffering servant. I'll finish with this quote from Scottish pastor Robert Murray McCheyne: **"Ah! believers, you are a tempted people. You are always poor and needy. And God intends it should be so, to give you constant errands to go to Jesus. Some may say, it is not good to be a believer; but ah! see to whom we can go."**

Song – O Jesus I have promised

[O Jesus, I Have Promised - YouTube](#)

Song – O Church Arise

[O Church Arise - Keith & Kristyn Getty - YouTube](#)

Benediction

¹² *The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;* ¹³ *planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God.* ¹⁴ *They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green,* ¹⁵ *proclaiming, "The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him."*

Morning Tea

There is no physical morning tea allowed at the moment but why not give someone a call instead? Who might your ring now?