

Sunday September 26, 2021

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer (Steve G)

Good morning and welcome to Charlestown Presbyterian! My name is Steve Gillard and from myself and my family it's wonderful to have you join us. Sadly, we all haven't been able to see enough of our church family over the past 18 months, but despite this it's re-assuring to know that we still have unity in a Christ who both loves us and saves us. And this binds us together in bonds that cannot be broken. In psalm 100: 5 we read "*For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*" Let's start with a time of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we come before You today because you are the one true God, both the God who loves us, and the God who saves us. We confess that time and again we are guilty of letting you down, and for this we are sorry. We thank-you for the completed work of salvation through the death and resurrection of your son Jesus. We pray for your presence this morning and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit as we remove distractions, focus on your word, and grow in our faith. We pray all this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Song – Come people of the risen king

[Come People of the Risen King \(with lyrics\) - Keith & Kristyn Getty - YouTube](#)

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| <p>1. Come, people of the risen King,
Who delight to bring Him praise.
Come, all and tune your hearts to sing
To the Morning Star of grace.
From the shifting shadows of the earth
We will lift our eyes to Him,
Where steady arms of mercy reach
To gather children in.</p> | <p>2. Come, those whose joy is morning sun
And those weeping through the night.
Come, those who tell of battles won,
And those struggling in the fight.
For His perfect love will never change,
And His mercies never cease,
But follow us through all our days
With the certain hope of peace.</p> |
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Chorus

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Let every tongue rejoice!
One heart, one voice, O Church of Christ, rejoice!*

3. Come, young and old from every land,
Men and women of the faith.
Come, those with full or empty hands,
Find the riches of His grace.
Over all the world, His people sing,
Shore to shore we hear them call
The Truth that cries through every age;
'Our God is all in all'.

Bible Reading – Ezekiel 36:22-37 (NIV)

¹⁸ So I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with their idols. ¹⁹ I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. ²⁰ And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, 'These are the LORD's people, and yet they had to leave his land.' ²¹ I had concern for my holy name, which the people of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone. ²² "Therefore say to the Israelites, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. ²³ I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.

24 "For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

28 Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. 29 I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. 30 I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine. 31 Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. 32 I want you to know that I am not doing this for your sake, declares the Sovereign LORD. Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, people of Israel! 33 "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt. 34 The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it. 35 They will say, "This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited." 36 Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the LORD have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.' 37 "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Once again I will yield to Israel's plea and do this for them: I will make their people as numerous as sheep, 38 as numerous as the flocks for offerings at Jerusalem during her appointed festivals. So will the ruined cities be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

Announcements for 26th September

NSW School Holidays. It is important that Churches have been busy times and quieter times. During school holidays we try and stop most of our regular activities to give our dedicated leaders a good break. So this week there will be no SPARKLERS, IMPACT or Home Groups. They will start back again in early October when NSW schools return for term 4.

Focus for the month – Family Prayer. How have you gone with family prayer this month? Have you been able to prioritise it more? Have you tried anything that worked? Please let Stephen know as that might help others into the future. But if things are not working why not talk to Jon or Suzie or Stephen to find out some other ideas.

COVID Regulations. We are all locking forward to getting out of lockdown soon but it doesn't seem like we will be able to meet for physical church until the middle of October. We will let you know when and how when the NSW government makes a more definitive announcement. But please do all you can to come back when we are able. We will make things as safe as possible from a health point of view but it will be up to all of us play our part as we encourage one another in the faith. So please make it a priority to worship God with his people whenever you can for the rest of the year.

Keeping in Touch. In the meantime, it is important for us all to make sure that others are doing OK in this lockdown. So why not give someone a call today, I am sure they will appreciate it.

Christmas Boxes for Operation Christmas Child It looks like our two options have become one option because of the extended lockdown in the Hunter! So, if you would like to be involved this year through the Church then the only way is to pay money to OCC for the box and its contents. If you would like to do this then please transfer \$20 per box to church account. (\$10 for postage and \$10 to have box filled) BSB 062 829, Number 1019 4850 Reference: OCC and you name (name is optional). Leila Fells from OCC will fill boxes on your behalf. There may be other ways to collect and fill a box but if you want to go down that path then you will need to do this independently.

Facebook/Video Services. If you have enjoyed a sermon or service why not post a response? Or tell us what you liked about it. The more we interact in this way, the more we encourage those who are working hard for each other and the way the Facebook algorithm works, the wider the video is distributed to others.

Church Finances.

Budget offerings for August	\$30,008
Actual Offerings for August	\$24,226
Deficit for August	\$ 5,782
Deficit for Jan-Aug 2021	\$15,226

This year has been a difficult one financially for our Church. Our regular bills still all need to be paid but with people not coming each week to Church, the needs of the church are not front and centre in most our minds. Please keep supporting us as best you can during these difficult times.

Song – Rock of Ages

[Rock of ages - Ruth Buchanan \(live at LiT\) - YouTube](#)

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| 1. Rock of ages, cleft for me.
Hide me now, my refuge be.
Let the water and the blood
From your wounded side which flowed,
Be for sin the double cure.
Cleanse me from its guilt and power. | 3. Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to your cross I cling;
Naked come to You for dress;
Helpless look to You for grace,
Stained by sin to You I cry.
Wash me, Saviour or I die. |
| 2. Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfill your law's demands.
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
You must save, and You alone. | 4. While I draw this fleeting breath;
When my eyelids close in death;
When I soar to realms unknown,
Bow before the judgment throne,
Hide me now my refuge be;
Rock of ages, cleft for me. |

Family Matters (Wilkinson Family).

Praying together as a family wasn't something that was particularly familiar to Greg or myself growing up. We both became Christians when our first son was a baby. After being invited to other Christian homes by families from church, we started saying a simple Grace- a prayer of thanks for our meal before dinner each night. We soon had two little boys and would give thanks for our food with them before dinner, but also began praying with them after reading a children's bible together, which we did most days.

Our first two children have grown up and left our home now, and over the years our family prayer time has evolved. As the number of children in our family grew, our before dinner Grace became longer- but we found our prayers were rushed as everyone was keen to begin eating! So instead, we switched to saying a brief Grace before dinner and also a longer prayer time after dinner. We have found this is the best time to do it as we are all gathered together at the dining table to eat, and our children don't leave the table until after prayer time. Our family devotions times have been a bit hit and miss over the years but since our focus on family devotions in church earlier this year we got some good ideas and have been back on track. So, when dinner is finished, we have a time of family devotions, and then pray together as a family.

Because of our children's ages, we usually have one younger child pray, then an older child, then Greg or I finish the prayer time. We ask the children to volunteer to pray but sometimes end up choosing them. When we have had short term foster children stay with us, we have never expected them to pray out loud, but it has been really encouraging to see that in time most of them have chosen to pray with us.

As we pray, we expect the children to sit quietly at the table, ideally with their eyes closed and not fiddling with things. Some years ago, we found that occasionally the children would use prayer time to lift themselves up, or bring their siblings down- for example praying 'please help my little sister to not play with the dog during prayer time'. We quickly put a stop to that!

We try to talk about what we will pray about before we actually pray. We will often pray about whatever we learned about in our devotion for that day. We encourage our children to think about who they can pray for in the world - people from school, church, our family and the wider world. For the younger ones we have taught them the simple 'teaspoon' prayer method- 'TSP'- that is, 'thank you, sorry, please'. We have found that thank yous and pleases come easily, but sorrys are a lot harder. Greg and I try to encourage the children to say sorry by confessing our own shortcomings to God during prayer, which we find helps.

Recently Greg has been teaching the children the 'ACTS' model of prayer- Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication. It is a work in progress! Sometimes we will recite the Lord's prayer together, pausing so the younger children can repeat the words after us as they learn it. One of the blessings of being in lockdown is that most nights we have dinner together & can then have a time of devotions and prayer together. That is something we can give thanks to God for!

Pastoral Prayer (David W)

Let's pray. Lord God as your word says in Psalm 117 "Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love towards us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!" Father God with so much happening in the world at the moment we find that we are often too easily distracted from the most important thing we can do which is to praise and worship you. We pray that you will help us to take our eyes off our own worries and concerns and look to the love, power majesty and beauty of your son Jesus. Remind us that no matter what stresses we may experience in life, your unconditional love and faithfulness to us finds its supreme expression in Jesus. May we both as individuals and as a church always seek to have your name honoured and praised throughout the whole world.

Father we pray for churches around the world that are struggling to meet together in person due to Covid 19. We thank you that there are technology work arounds to enable us to continue to be in touch with one another as well as to enable us to hear your word read and explained, to pray together and to sing your praises. Father we pray that Zoom fatigue would not prevent us from building one another up in our faith and we pray that you will grant us patience and perseverance during the lockdown. Please grant your churches wisdom as they consider the best ways to resume meeting together in person and we pray that we will all look to serve one another in love not asserting our rights but being willing to give up our individual rights for the benefit of others.

Father God we pray for families not just in our church but throughout the whole country that have found living together in close proximity for long periods of time difficult. Please enable families to be patient with one another and to grow in your grace. We pray that you would protect those who are at risk of domestic violence and that they would be able to access the resources they need to stay safe.

We pray that during lock down that our leaders will properly resource and support Police, Ambulance, and Fire services in such a way that our communities maintain peace and safety. Lord God we pray that you will grant our leaders wisdom and courage to develop plans as to how best for our wider community to emerge from lockdown Father we ask that you will have mercy on those whose livelihoods have been badly affected by lockdowns and border closures. We pray that as many people find that the things that

they thought gave them security in life such money, jobs and good health are not as secure as they thought that many would turn to You and put their faith in your son Jesus and it is in his name that we pray all these things. Amen

Bible Reading – Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NIV)

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. ³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Sermon – Clearing God’s name (Stephen T)

Its hard, so hard, to clear your name, isn’t it? When someone has said something that is blatantly untrue about you. When another person has gossiped a falsehood about your character. When you have been slandered amongst your friends, your workmates or on social media. It is so, so difficult to fix up the mess and clear your name. And when someone has spoken untruths about me or my family, I get angry. This is not fair. It is bad enough when the truth gets out and I have to deal with the consequences of my own poor actions, but it is even worse when there is not a shred of evidence to back up the lies but everyone seems to believe what they are hearing about me.

Slide 3

And that works not just for us as humans but for God as well. The Lord has a name and a reputation to uphold as well. And so, when the nation of Israel, the group of people that God has chosen and saved, walk away from the Lord and his ways, God’s name is trashed. And when the Church, the people of God today fall and fall badly it is not just the person’s name or the Churches name that is dragged through the mud, God’s name is trashed as well.

That’s what we see happening in Ezekiel 36. Five times we read that Israel’s conduct has profaned God’s holy name. You see when they worship idols and shed innocent blood, when they fail to give justice to the poor and needy and when their conduct is not up to God’s standard, they are not just harming their own reputation but profaning God’s holy name. And you have to say there has been a lot of profaning God’s name by his people recently. Christ Embassy in Sydney caught meeting in secret in the middle of a pandemic is not good news for God’s reputation. Nor are paedophile priests. Or money hungry pastors. Or Christian marriages ending in bitter divorce. Or harmful splits in the Church. Or Christian hypocrisy.

For God’s name is tied up with the actions and character of his people. So, what will God do about it? Judge his people, sure that is fair but his name is still trashed. Give people another chance? That is gracious but if they make the same mistakes again that will just drag God’s name again into the dirt. So, God decides to do something even more radical. He will gather the displaced, cleanse the dirty, he will transform the disobedient and he will restore the disgraced and he will not do this just for their sakes but for his own name’s sake.

Slide 4

Ezekiel 36 teaches us that when God steps in and changes everything it is not primarily about you or me. It is about him. Yes, we get the goodies and our life is changed but it is not primarily about us, it is about God & so if we have received God’s grace, then we should be less concerned about our name and more concerned with his name. Our passion to live life to the full is no longer just all about me and my happiness, my comfort, my security. For it has become all about Him. The Lord. I am now living for him and

his glory. I want the whole world to give him the praise & honour that his name, the name above every name, deserves

Slide 5

Which is why in Ezekiel 36 a phrase is repeated twice, once at the beginning of this passage and once toward the end. Look with me at verse 22, *“Therefore say to the Israelites, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: **It is not for your sake**, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, **but for the sake of my holy name**, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone.”* And then come with me to verse 32, *“I want you to know that I am **not doing this for your sake**, declares the Sovereign LORD.”* What God does for his people is not really about YOU or ME or ISRAEL. It’s about HIM. Which is why he will firstly

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1. Gather the Displaced (verse 24)

²⁴ *“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.”* Now that makes a lot of sense, doesn’t it? For in Ezekiel’s world where every nation had its own god and that god was meant to defend you & protect you, when god judges his people and they go into the exile and the land goes to rack and ruin then you can imagine the people of Babylon saying to themselves, *“our god was stronger than Israeli’s god!”* And when the nations around Israel saw Yahweh’s people being deported, they would say to one another *“Yahweh was too weak to defend his people.”*

So, the Lord’s street cred, his name, his reputation is damaged because God is judging his people justly. So, to change all that, the first thing the Lord says he will do is to bring them back to their land. To ensure that his people get to come back home. God was holy in judging his people. But God is strong and powerful when he brings them home.

Which He did. In accordance with the prophesy of Jeremiah, 70 years after the exile came the return of the people of God. And the rebuilding of the nation of Israel. Our Lord to clear his name is shown to be full of justice and mercy. He is strong and powerful and in control no matter what happens in our world. And one day that will be proved beyond a shadow of a doubt when he brings his people to their heavenly home. A new land. And the nations will be gob smacked and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. But the Lord’s actions don’t just end there He will

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2. Gather the displaced and Cleanse the Dirty (verse 25)

²⁵ *“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.”* It is no good for the Lord to bring his people back to the land if they are still as dirty and sinful as ever. For the Lord’s name will continue to receive collateral damage. So, the Lord can’t just bring them back, he has to wash them and cleanse them as well. But this isn’t just as easy as getting out a bar of soap & putting their clothes into a washing machine. For the people of Israel are dirty inside & out & will need not just a superficial cleansing but a deep cleaning

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You know when a business has found that someone with COVID has been working within its walls, a can of Dettol spray is not sufficient to take away the disease. You need a whole stack of people to come in and deep clean everything. Similarly, when the Lord comes to the people of Israel, he doesn’t just sprinkle them with water or give them a bath, he purifies them and he refines them. This is not just minor surgery but a complete heart transplant.

For they have not just committed little sins and so have a little bit of dirt on them. They are sick with sin. They are filthy. They are dirty from top to toe, inward & outward. In case we are feeling too comfortable here, the New Testament says that we are all in the same boat.

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We looked at Ephesians 2 last week. *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.”*

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We are just as dirty, as sick with sin, in need of a deep clean as the Israelites. Which is why the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6 says this about you and me, *“Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. **But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”***

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It was not just the people of God in Ezekiel’s time that need to be cleansed. We need the wonder-working power of the cleansing blood of Christ as well. How does the hymn Rock of Ages put it? *“Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling. Naked, come to Thee for dress, Helpless, look to Thee for grace, Vile, I to the fountain fly, Wash me, Saviour, or I die!”*

And God is able to cleanse people like you and me. He is able to wash us & purify us so that when he brings us home, we are not dirty anymore. We have a fresh start. But really, we need more than just a fresh start, we need a new heart. For without it we will be like a dog washed & cleaned who then decides to straight away roll in the mud? Which means unless something happens, we will trash the Lord’s name again by getting into the same sin cycle!

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3. Gather the displaced, cleanse the dirty & **transform the disobedient (verse 26)**

²⁶ “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

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So, the Lord goes deeper, much deeper. Because our problem is not just on the outside, in our environment, it is at the core of our being. Our heart, our will, our spirit is the source of our problem. As someone has said, “the heart of the problem is the problem of the human heart.” For wasn’t it Jesus who said in Matthew 15:18 *“¹⁸ But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. ²⁰ These are what defile a person;”* These are the things that make us dirty before the Lord.

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And Ezekiel is telling us that the Lord himself promises to remove from us our heart of stone. A heart of stone is hard. A heart of stone is cold. A heart of stone is dead. If the Lord is talking to a heart of stone, it is like talking to a brick wall! It reflects a cold, unfeeling, obstinate disposition towards the Lord.

In the words of Spurgeon, *“Hard hearts are the devil’s life-guards. When he once gets a man in an armour of proof— that of a hard heart— “Now,” says he, “you may go anywhere.” So, he sends them to hear the minister, and they make fun of him; he lets them read religious books, and they can find something to mock at there; he will then turn them even to the Bible, and with their hard heart they may read the Bible pretty safely, for even the Word of God the hard heart can turn to mischief, and find something to find fault with even in the person of Christ, and in the glorious attributes of God himself.”*

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Nobel prize winner author, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, put it this way, *“If only there were evil people somewhere committing evil deeds, and all that needed to happen was separate them from the rest*

of us and destroy them...If we could just divide the good ones from the bad ones and get rid of them. Everything will be ok. But it's not like that." He goes onto say, "But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. Every human, by nature has a heart that needs changing. The problem isn't between you and me. The problem is in all of us."

Which is why washing us will not be good enough. Nor will it be enough if the Lord bring us back home, that will change our present but not our future. And it will mean all of us if our hearts are hard will end up living lives that continue to trash the Lord's name. Which is why the Lord has to do some heart surgery. He removes the heart of stone and gives us a heart of flesh. A new heart one which is warm and loving and responsive to the word of God.

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Only a new heart can renew our thought patterns. Only a new heart can change our will and passions. Only a new heart can transform us into the people that the Lord wants us to be. And that new heart will be powered by a new spirit. God's Holy Spirit. And it is God's Holy Spirit that will give us a love of righteousness and a hatred of sin. It is God's Holy Spirit that will give us the power to say no to the wrong thing and yes to the right thing. God's Holy Spirit, God Himself living in us, He alone removes our old, unresponsive, unyielding, dead heart of stone and replace it with a warm, living, responsible heart of flesh.

And that is what God's people need and that is what we need. A new heart. But think about it for a moment. Today when there is heart surgery, someone must be willing to give you a new heart, their new heart. And that person must die in order to do it. And isn't that what Jesus does? He dies for us & he gives us his heart and his spirit. So that we might live. Real transformation comes when our old nature dies and it is replaced by the person of Christ.

The Lord does for his people what they couldn't do for themselves. God's grace achieves what the law could never achieve. He causes us to be born again. You see when the Lord comes into our lives, he doesn't just take you straight up to heaven, to enjoy the wonderful things he has in store for all his people. He brings heaven to us. He makes us holy. He places within us a desire not to sin. Life from then on is not all about me, but all about Him.

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4. And lastly, he restores the disgraced (verse 28-35)

²⁸ "Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine. Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices."

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The Lord leads us to a life of blessing. A life lived in His presence. A life enjoying the fruits of living in God's place at God's time under God's rule. In fact, God promises what looks like a new Eden. Verse 33 *"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt. The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it. They will say, "This land that was laid waste has become like **the garden of Eden**; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited."*

It is a sign of God's goodness to us. His extraordinary kindness and grace. Verse 29. That *"we are saved from all of our uncleanness"*. Verse 33. *"We are cleansed from all of our sins."* What God sets out to do, he does completely. No half-hearted measures here. And when he transforms his people. When he changes their direction. When he moves the centre of our being away from ourselves and on to the Lord of all, then

the nations will know that the Lord is not weak but strong. His name is not to be profaned but praised. For the Lord has given us everything we need to bring glory to His name.

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So how does this work out in practice? Listen to the words of Joni Eareckson Tada. She says *“Early on in my disability there were times when I felt He as asking too much of me” to trust and obey Him in spite of severe paralysis and a life sentence in a wheelchair. I felt like a martyr. That martyr complex, I’ve come to realise was fostered **by concentrating too much on what God asked of me – and not enough on what God has given me.**”*

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In his book 'Visions of Heaven and Hell', John Bunyan wrote that after listening to his atheist friend, about there not being a God, he was so depressed & hopeless that he decided to take his life & find out either way. But after going into the woods with a knife, he heard a voice from heaven telling him not to commit suicide, He wrote *“this touched my heart with such a sense of my own unworthiness that I could only cry out 'O, how utterly unworthy I am of all this grace & mercy”* the rescuing angel then said **“when God decided to show mercy, He did not consult your unworthiness, but his own unbounded goodness and vast love.”**

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You see this life is not about Me, even if we keep wanting to make it about ourselves. It is about HIM. It is not about our worthiness or unworthiness, our money or our poverty, our marriage or our singleness, our employment or unemployment, our gifts and talents or our lack of gifts and talents. We are not at the centre of the universe. Our Lord is not a genie in a bottle giving us the three wishes that we want each and every day. Our job is to glorify his name, honour his name, point us to the worthiness of his name.

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And that is a great theme that continues into the New Testament. We hear Paul say in 1 Corinthians 10:31 *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”* Life is not about my glory. It is not about my name or my comfort. It is about God’s name and its about God’s glory. So, when I remember God’s unbounded goodness and his vast love unto me, I should want to praise him, worship him, live for him.

The problems that inflict the Church today are often caused when we live for self rather than live for God. And if two people are both living for self they will clash somewhere along the line, every marriage knows that, every church knows that. So, we need to keep on turning our eyes upon Jesus. Looking full in his wonderful face. And things of earth, the problems surrounding us, even the loss of our good name in the sight of others, will go strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

Slide 23

So, when Jesus was teaching his disciples to pray he didn’t get them to start with their needs or even their greeds, he began Lord’s prayer with these words *“Our Father in heaven. **Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**”*

The first priority in this prayer is to ensure God’s name is hallowed, God is given the glory and honour and praise he alone deserves. The first thing on our minds, the first thing on our lips is not ME but HIM. Not my reputation but his reputation. Not my will but his will. Not my glory but his glory. And so I pray, whenever I pray the Lord’s prayer, I am reminded that this is of first important in my life. And so when I finish praying the Lord’s prayer, I need to look to the power of the Holy Spirit as He works in my new heart to enable the very thing that I prayed for to become the very thing I intend to live for.

Slide 24

And we see at the end of the Bible, with multitudes of people from every nation, along with angels and animals are all before the throne and what are they doing? *“Singing holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.”* They are giving him the glory that his holy name deserves. Then

they sing to the Father *"You are worthy, our Lord and God to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things and by your will they were created and have their being."*

And then their attention is turned to Jesus. The one whose death enables the dirty to be cleaned. The one who like the good shepherd has gathered the displaced and brought them home, the one who restores the disgraced and the one who has operated on his people and given us a new heart and sent to us the Spirit of the living God to take up residence within us. They sing to him *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise."* Where is this world heading? To a place where God's name is no longer profaned but praised. Where God's name is well and truly cleared because God's people are no longer living for self and dragging God's name through the mud but they have been completely and utterly transformed and their lives point all who will notice to the mighty name of Jesus.

Slide 25

Alexander the Great is a man who deserves his name for he conquered most of the known world by the age of 30. But there's a story about a young soldier in his army who's brought to Alexander because he's deserted in battle. Alexander the Great starts out softly. Asking, "What's your name soldier?" "Alexander," says the young guy. *Angry now*, Alexander yells, **"What** is your name?!?" "Alex... ander." Even louder. Looking into the young deserter's eyes, Alexander the Great says, "Soldier, either change your ways... or *change your name!*"

Slide 26

Now what is your name? Is it Christian? Are you a follower of Christ? Do you know that embedded in your name is the name of Jesus Christ? Well then you should have a passion to glorify that name. To point others to that name. To live for that name because he has given you life itself and he has promised you eternal life as well. We need to change our ways or change our name. And God promises to change our ways through the work of the HS. Praise the Lord!

Song – O breathe of life

[O Breath Of Life \(Acoustic Song Leading Video\) // Emu Music - YouTube](#)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. O Breath of life, come sweeping through us,
Revive Your church with life and power.
O Breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,
And fit Your church to meet this hour. | 4. O Breath of love, come breathe within,
Renewing thought and will and heart;
Come, Love of Christ, afresh to win,
Revive Your church in every part. |
| 2. O Breath of love, come breathe within,
Renewing thought and will and heart;
Come, Love of Christ, afresh to win,
Revive Your church in every part. | 5. Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating
While harvest fields are vast and ripe?
Revive us, Lord, the world is waiting,
Equip Your church to spread the light. |
| 3. O Wind of God, come bend us, break us,
Till humbly we confess our need;
Then in Your tenderness remake us,
Revive, restore, for this we plead. | 6. O Breath of love, come breathe within,
Renewing thought and will and heart;
Come, Love of Christ, afresh to win,
Revive Your church in every part. |

Benediction ²⁵ *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.* ²⁶ *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.* ²⁷ *And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*

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? Maybe the person you are hoping to keep in touch with?