

Sunday: 23 October

Joel 2:23-32

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

Luke 18:9-14



“There is no other”

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Not sure what was in your reading list this week? But I dipped into an online site called Ship of Fools. At the top of the mystery worshiper yesterday was a report on a visit to The Oxford Oratory, Oxford, England. Under the review headings was:

” **Exactly how long was the sermon?** 7 mins. A model of clarity and concision.

Ahaa! I thought a challenge. So the video of the Bishops Charge (28 minutes) which I thought you might like instead of listening to my reflection on the readings was put aside.

The next heading:

On a scale of 1-10, how good was the preacher?

9 — the format was the exposition of doctrine, making it meaningful and relevant.

Maybe I should edit the Bishops’ charge !!

Thank you for those who have read this morning. I wonder if any of the readers have comments on their reading. Something that stood out for them, an image or phrase?

(leave space for discussion)

Our heading in the weekly sheet.

Our Lord the Righteous Judge. There is in all our readings words of justified, vindicated, righteousness. Does this fit with the God we cry out to?

OT: Joel

There is no scholarly consensus on the dating or origin of Joel. The content falls into what are called oracles of desolation and consolation. And as Garrett Galvin states, *“This passage delivers a reading full of hope after many verses stating the difficult straits in which Israel found itself.”*

Look at v27 **You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I, the LORD, am your God and there is no other.**

“there is no other”. This passage was the key phrase for me. It calls on the tradition of both Deuteronomy and Isaiah of an emerging monotheism. And the reading pivots around it.

There follows a vision, in words, of life with God – I don’t know about you but it sounds a bit liked a wonderful post barbecue or similar, where the wise kuia & the grandads - sit under the shade, talking/dreaming dreams. They young and energetic are supervising the very young, while talking about the world and its issues. And for a short time all is well.

Earlier in the reading verse 23 talks about rain and it is easy for us to with the wet winter & flooding events, to forget the importance of rain for planting and growth, for a good harvest. There is a nervousness that those of us not living on the land are removed from, prices may go up or we may not be able to source our favourite fruit & vegetables. There is however a real comparison to our own situations where life is not an abundant garden a never ending picnic, there will be times of spiritual dryness and spiritual abundance.

Who here has watched the Rob Bell video “Rain” – where a father takes his young son for a walk and is caught by a downpour? Will worth watching.

This is not the Gospel of Prosperity, while we shouldn’t seek out suffering, it there will times and we should be prepared. But also know **I, the LORD, am your God and there is no other.**

Verse: ³²*Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved;*

Epistle: 2 Timothy

We are drawing close to the end of 2 Timothy and here Paul is reflecting on his impending death.

In the prior verses Paul has been giving instructions to Timothy, v5 *“as for you always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.*

And now Paul addresses his own ministry:

Poured out as a libation, a pouring out, a sacrifice – Paul wants his audience to think of his life and imminent death as an offering. While he may be martyred his life is already offered to God.

I have fought the good fight = demonstrated courage, determination. But also fought in good struggles

I have finished the race, = the race, for Paul has completed what has been set before them.

I have kept the faith. = both in the sense that his life reflects his faith and that he has guarded the deposit of faith and is now passing it on.

Stephen Fowl notes: *“Taking these three assertions together, Paul is offering a robust estimation of his life in Christ. This is confirmed in 4:8 when he expresses the confident view that the Lord, the righteous judge, will award him the crown of righteousness.*

Gospel: Luke

All of which segues quite nicely into the Gospel reading.

Are you holding the images of:

The God, “‘there is no other’ who is there when we call out

And the “Lord, the righteous judge.....(who) stood by me and gave me strength”

- ³²Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved;

Our reading from Luke follows directly on from last week’s parable of the Widow and the Judge.

This morning Jesus is addressing “some who trusted in themselves” Look back at Luke 11:22 *“but when one stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted”*

“And who regarded others with contempt.”

V10 *“Two men went up to the temple to pray” (so far so good)*

One a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. We have images already.

The Pharisee prays or maybe we hear him promoting himself and rounding this off with thanking God that he is not like others ...”even this tax collector.”

The tax collector as we have heard, stands far off and prays / beseeches *“God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”*

And it all sounds quite straightforward, & the Tax collector goes home justified. There is perhaps a nice contrast between the Pharisee and the tax collector and between

those who trust in themselves that they are righteous and those who trust in God to justify them.

Is one of the challenges for us that we might rather like feeling exalted, we might begin to believe that the things that we do or don't do might justify us? Or perhaps the other perspective do we believe that because we do not measure up to the standards of the Pharisee in ourselves.

Where are we in the story?

Is there hope for the Tax Collector? *Of course he has called on our merciful God.*

Is there hope for the Pharisee? God is patient

Is there hope for us? We are God's people.

In the words of J Newton - Amazing Grace: V4

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
My shield and stronghold he shall be
As long as life endures.

Meda Stampa says "the strangely good news of the parable is that the role of the tax collector is available to all of us. We and everyone around us, are all sinners and all beloved children of the gracious Father. The parable invites us to experience the freedom that comes with casting away our flimsy armour and throwing ourselves into the arms of God, who is already there, who has already founds us, who wants more than anything to lift us up and lead us home."

I would like to finish with a quote from Tom Wright:

"In particular, of course, the hope of Jesus' coming as judge to put right all that is wrong in the world and to give new life to the dead, is the context for one of our central themes, to which we can at last turn. If all this is so, what can we say about the future that awaits every one of us, every baptized believer in Jesus Christ? What precisely do we mean, for ourselves, when we speak of the future resurrection?"

Last review question from the Ship of Fools:

What one thing will you remember about all this in seven days' time?

A member of the congregation slowly and deliberately taking the long route back to their seat after making their communion. Every painful step through the house of God, a prayer?

The answer obviously was they were recovering after the Parish Fair / Plant Fair the day before.

Let us pray (in silence) [that God's love strengthen us to do God's will]

God of holiness,
Increase within us
Your gifts of faith, hope, and love,
And make us cherish what you promise;
Through Jesus Christ who is alive with you,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and forever.
Amen

Luke 18:9-14

⁹He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: ¹⁰"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Joel 2:23-32

²³O children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in the LORD your God; for he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the later rain, as before. ²⁴The threshing floors shall be full of grain, the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. ²⁵I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent against you. ²⁶You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. ²⁷You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I, the LORD, am your God and there is no other. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

²⁸Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. ²⁹Even

on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit. ³⁰I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. ³²Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

⁶As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

¹⁶At my first defence-- no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.