



September 2021

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“What next, St Mark’s”



Recently, I was helping my 2-year-old granddaughter, Zara, out the sliding door to go for a walk (ride) around the garden. Zara held my hand gripped tightly around my thumbs, as I was helping her step outside. It struck me that Zara and I probably had very different perspectives of what was going on in that moment.

To Zara, it likely seemed that everything depended on her holding fast to my thumbs, and of course her firm grip helped her keep her balance. At the same time, I knew that whether she held on or not, the rest of my hands were wrapped around her little wrists and I would never let her fall.

I think that’s a pretty good image of the life of faith. What we do matters! Our attendance at worship, our participation in events, our prayers for our congregation, our generosity to support our mission – all of these efforts strengthen our ministry and make a difference. At the same time, we confess – and give thanks! – that God is always present, guiding, leading, and supporting us in our work to be the congregation God and the world need us to be.

Certainly that has been our experience over the previous eighteen months. The resilience, the generosity of our members, the increased outreach of our whole congregation all made a huge difference. Yet we know and confess that

it was by God’s grace alone that we have come this far. Both realities – our efforts and God’s promises – matter. Except it’s more than that, too.

It’s not just that we can participate in God’s mission in the world, it’s also that we are blessed when we do. Martin Luther captures that conviction brilliantly in explaining what it means to pray “thy will be done.” Luther writes, “The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also be done among us.”

I love Luther’s confidence in God’s promise. God’s will simply will be done, whether we pray for it or not. But we still have a part to play, and so we ask God to work in us and through us. Ultimately, what we do matters not because God is dependent on us, but because God wants us to experience the sheer joy, wonder, and power of being part of God’s kingdom.

This grants us a tremendous amount of freedom. We don’t have to come to church, to give generously, to share what we have, to reach out in love to others, to work for a more fair world. God will continue to be at work whether we participate in that work or not (and even if we resist it!). But we are invited to be a part of that good work and experience God’s power and presence in our lives more fully.

I believe we have learned a lot over the last year. We’ve learned how important our in-person worship and gatherings are. We’ve learned how much our faith and congregation mean to us.

And we've learned so many new ways to connect with each other.

All of which leaves us ready for new ambitions, important endeavors, and grand dreams. And you are now invited to be a part of God's work here by offering your prayers, support, financial strength, and regular participation so that God's will may not just be done – it will! – but that it may be done among us.

All of which invites us to ask: what will we use our God-given freedom for? What, in other words, comes next? Again, God has set you free. You don't have to do anything to earn God's grace and love. But you get to do all kinds of things to participate in the ongoing work of God's kingdom.

So, I encourage you to make use of your freedom and pledge your support to the vital ministries of this congregation and experience more deeply the blessing of being generous. Use your freedom every Sunday morning to join us in worship and be strengthened in your faith.

Use your freedom to grow in faith, join a fellowship group and make new friends, volunteer in one of our outreach activities and help your neighbour. In all these ways and more, God continues to lead, guide, and bless us by inviting us into God's work. All with the promise that while our efforts matter, God will never, ever let us fall.



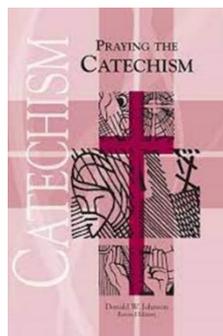
Pastor Ray Morris

Praying the Catechism

"Your will be done, on earth as in heaven."

What does this mean?

In fact, God's good and gracious will comes about without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come about in and among us.



How does this come about?

Whenever God breaks and hinders every evil scheme and will – as are present in the will of the devil, the world, and our flesh – that would not allow us to honour God's name and would prevent the coming of his kingdom, and instead whenever God strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in his word and in faith until the end of our lives. This is God's gracious and good will.

Pause and Reflect

Have you ever hoped that God would take strong action to clean up the mess we and all people of the world have made? With the strong arm of force, all would be called to obey.

God has chosen to call, to encourage, and to show his love and forgiveness, that the power would come from the hearts of the people of the earth. God appears to have time, while we grow impatient in our hunger for the will of God.

You are someone who has heard this gentle voice of God calling you to live the kingdom. You are selected to be a part of God's plan of saving the world. Are you willing to respond to this call?

Do you wait for others? Is it enough that God called you and invites you to pray with word and action, "Your will be done"?

- Pray for grace to see how God has called you.
- Pray for God's help to see that your life is a gift to the kingdom.
- Pray for those to be baptised, that they may receive help and courage from St Mark's as they are called to be a part of the will of God on earth.



Slow to Anger

Godly Conversations



A few weeks ago the Sunday sermon on John 6:51-58 created more than the normal conversation after worship and even into the next week!

Here are some further thoughts to keep the conversation going during a pandemic...

I recently saw a postcard that read, “This is only part of the story. This is not the whole story. This is God’s world.”

It is good to be reminded that this is God’s world. Because over the past two weeks, the news has been grim. Consider alone the latest COVID news reports: the rapid spread of the delta variant, the strain on health care systems, the increase in test-positivity rates, and the heated debates about how all this might impact the return to school. Masking policies have triggered outrage, vitriol, and even physical violence around the country. In protests in many states, some people have compared mask mandates to Jews being forced to wear yellow stars during the Holocaust. Not only does this fail the basic standards of thoughtful analysis but it also fuels outrage and deepens communal divides.

Slowness to anger

Over twenty wisdom sayings in the book of Proverbs deal with human anger. And make no mistake: the sages do not place much faith in it. The New Testament epistle of James, which is deeply influenced by Old Testament wisdom literature, minces no words: “You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness” (1:19). This deserves repeating:

our unbridled anger does not produce righteousness . . . no matter how much we are convinced otherwise.

Of all the qualities of wise speech, this one, slowness to anger, may be the most needed in our current context, and the most difficult to cultivate.

Six verses between Proverbs 12 and 29 explicitly say that the wise are “slow to anger” (12:16; 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; 19:11; 29:11). They demonstrate “great understanding,” presumably of others, of themselves, of relationships, and of God (Prov. 14:29).

More specifically, those who are slow to anger “ignore insults” as well as a whole host of other foolish comments. Proverbs 12:16 says, “Fools show their anger at once but the prudent ignore an insult.” Proverbs 19:11 is more pointed: “Those with good sense are slow to anger, and it is their glory to overlook an offense.”

Overlooking an offense is glorious?

How counter-cultural! If someone makes an insensitive remark and we let it go instead of brewing over it: this is not only commendable but also noble and beautiful. This is not to say that Proverbs advocates turning a blind eye to harmful speech and actions. Naming a thing what it is, abuse for instance, is essential to the flourishing of community. But so is letting go of off-handed comments that bruise our egos. The sages liken slowness to anger to glory, because it is God-like. We imitate God through our patience, charity, generosity, and steadiness. Psalms 86, 103, and 145, for instance, promise this: “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8). Proverbs affirms that the wise calm not only themselves but also others.

They encourage harmony and model peace.

In today’s jargon, we might say that their own emotional self-regulation helps regulate the emotions of others, especially those who have “flipped their lids” in anger.

The wise meet outrage with calm and clarity. They adeptly de-escalate rather than escalate contentious conversations.

Those who are genuinely strong display self-discipline in relation to their anger. This is particularly necessary for leaders because of their potential—by virtue of their positions—to spread indignation throughout organizations, communities, and nations.

Proverbs 16:23 declares: “One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and one whose temper is controlled [is better] than one who captures a city.” Criticism is not found on the lips of trustworthy, respectable leaders.

In contrast, leaders who exude wrath and fury are dangerous. If we want to be wise, we ought not provoke them. Proverbs 19 and 20 compare a king’s anger to a growling lion. “Anyone who provokes him to anger forfeits life itself” (20:2). Proverbs addresses “anger” in the contexts of friendship and parenting as well. “Make no friends with those given to anger, and do not associate with hotheads” (22:24). Be wary of those who take offence easily, who react with fury regularly, who tweet their resentment for all the world to see. Avoid people like this if you can; do not listen to them or take their words to heart; or, give them wide berth if they are present in your circles.

Not surprisingly, Proverbs warns parents against disciplining their children in anger; to do so is to act unjustly and to diminish their well-being. “Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity and the rod of anger will fail,” says Proverbs 22:8.

Given all this, we might ask, “What do we do with our anger? We all feel angry at times and perhaps more so now after eighteen months of a pandemic. How do we understand our anger and transform it into wise speech for the sake of our common good?”

“Anger can be valuable if we use it as an alarm clock to wake us up—to realize that we have a need that isn’t being met and that we are thinking in a way that makes it unlikely to be met.”

(Marshall Rosenberg Nonviolent Communication, 144)

At the core of anger lies an unmet need or even a cluster of unmet needs. Needs are simply qualities that contribute to the flourishing of human life: things like peace, justice, belonging, understanding, reciprocity, intimacy, purpose, health, and so much more.

So, to use a simple example that I shared from my own life, if I am angry because someone is calling me names and making accusations, it is likely because I need and value consideration, respect, and consideration of my opinion.. But I

may not have access to those needs when I am caught up in judgment, accusations, and blame: “He shouldn’t be so domineering. How inconsiderate and narcissistic. He should learn to listen more. Hasn’t he read the book of Proverbs?” This kind of thinking fuels anger. The more we think this way, the angrier we become.

In contrast, Nonviolent Communication teach us to stop, slow down, and breathe whenever we start to feel angry. Then we simply can notice all the “shoulds” and “judgments” running through our minds. If we can, then we translate those into needs. What do we long for? What really matters to us? What is the life-giving quality that we want to see manifest in this relationship or context? If we can connect to what really matters to us (i.e., our common needs), then our anger will shift.

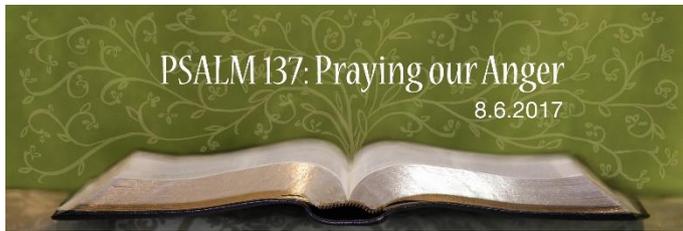
Because anger is a secondary emotion that usually masks hurt or fear. We may start to feel sadness, because we realize how frequently these needs are unmet. Or we may feel peace and contentment, because we are grounded in our most cherished values. In any case, we are no longer swept up in the blame, shame, judgment, or vitriol. No longer “shoulding” on ourselves or others, we can speak assertively, compassionately, and wisely in service of human flourishing.

So, the next time we feel swept up in outrage, let’s remember the wisdom of Proverbs and the God in whose image we are made: The One who is slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and mercy.

Let us slow down and breathe and connect with what we long for most, for ourselves, for our loved ones, for our communities: that all creatures might flourish and be made whole.

(Thank you to Faith Alive, posted on Aug 22. Theresa F. Latini, Ph.D.)





Praying our Hate - Psalm 137

“Psalm 137 is a hymn expressing the yearnings of the Jewish people during their Babylonian exile. In its whole form of nine verses, the psalm reflects the yearning for Jerusalem as well as hatred for the Holy City’s enemies with sometimes violent imagery. ... By Jeremias, in the Captivity.”

Here is a prayer that brings out the best but for the worst in us: vile, venomous, vicious hate. Can God handle our hate?

- 1 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.
- 2 There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
- 3 for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”
- 4 How can we sing the songs of the Lord
while in a foreign land?
- 5 If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill.
- 6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you,
if I do not consider Jerusalem
my highest joy.
- 7 Remember, Lord, what the Edomites did
on the day Jerusalem fell.
“Tear it down,” they cried,
“tear it down to its foundations!”
- 8 Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction,
happy is the one who repays you
according to what you have done to us.
- 9 Happy is the one who seizes your infants
and dashes them against the rocks

Reflect on these questions:

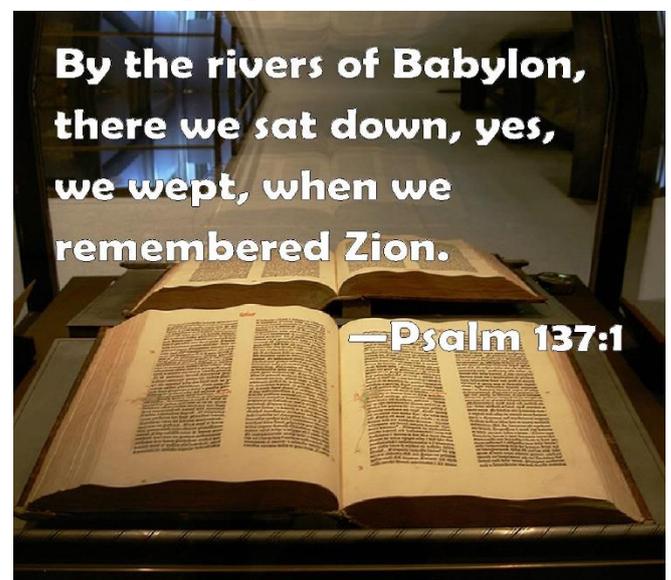
1. This Psalm combines the loveliest lyric we can sing with the ugliest emotion we can feel.

What makes verses 1-6 lovely?

What makes verses 7-9 ugly?

2. The Babylonian exile put God’s people where they did not want to be, with no hope of returning. When you have been where you didn’t want to be? Do verses 1-3 express anything similar to your experience?
3. Remembering your own experiences, how would you evaluate the emotions described in verses 4-6?
4. Why was Israel in Babylon, and how does that factor into the feelings they are expressing?
5. Israelites were an oft-conquered, much-trampled people. The Edomites in the past (v.7) and the Babylonians (v.8) in the present were oppressors. Imagine what it would be like to be the world’s patsy. How might that shape your prayers?
6. Jesus said “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 6:44). How can we possibly love and pray for such people?
7. The two dominant emotions in this prayer are self-pity (v.1-6) and avenging hate (v.7-9), neither of them particularly commendable. Praying our sins doesn’t, as such, clean them away. What does it do?

Note that this psalm is embedded in a collection of prayers that help us in confession and praise. Psalm 137 is not a stopping place; we have to go on to Psalm 138 and Psalm 139 if we are going to grow in prayer.



DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September

- 1 Romans 8:15, Your Adoption
- 2 Psalm 33:6, The Breath of God's Mouth
- 3 Song of Song 8:6, Like A Seal Over Your Heart
- 4 Matthew 25:21, Well Done
- 5 Proverbs 16:20, Blessed Is The One
- 6 John 8:24, Very Truly I Tell You
- 7 Matthew 6:25, Worry
- 8 Proverbs 6:20, Keep And Do Not Forsake
- 9 Joel 2:12, Return To Me
- 10 Isaiah 40:29, Strength
- 11 Psalm 138:8, Endures Forever
- 12 1 John 3:11, Love One Another
- 13 Matthew 5:14, Light Of The World
- 14 Proverbs 22:7, Be Careful
- 15 1 Timothy 2:1-2, Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions
- 16 Romans 5:19, Disobedience And Obedience
- 17 Psalm 30:5, Joy Comes With The Morning
- 18 Deuteronomy 31:8, Never Leave Or Forsake You
- 19 James 5:14-15, Pray Over Them
- 20 Proverbs 31:8, Speak For Those Who Cannot
- 21 Isaiah 51:12, Comforts You
- 22 1 Chronicles 29:12, Ruler Of All Things
- 23 Proverbs 21:21, Life, Prosperity And Honor
- 24 Mark 12:29-31, No Greater Commandments
- 25 Ephesians 5:15-20, Be Careful
- 26 Proverbs 18:2, No Pleasure in Understanding
- 27 Amos 3:7, Revealing
- 28 John 15:16, Bear Fruit
- 29 Proverbs 28:13, Confess, Find Mercy
- 30 Ezekiel 38:23, Greatness And Holiness



“Graze the Moment” Coffee Van at St Mark’s

Our morning teas could be something very special and a great opportunity to connect with our local community.

Commencing on 12th September before and after worship share a cuppa with a friend or visitor.

moving moments

Day Trip to visit

GINGER FACTORY

Date: Friday 24th September

Time: 10am to 2pm

Transport, Train & Lunch provided

Cost \$10.00

Please contact

0417 701 979

**to book your place
before 17th September**

THE
GINGER
FACTORY

PLAY | TASTE | DISCOVER



moving moments

The Moving Moments program

is part of Lutheran Services and is designed to offer our clients many varied opportunities to form connections. Connections with the children, connections with fellow clients and connections to our greater community.

Please feel free to contact us any time if you would like any information on the program and how you can join us

Ph: 0417 701 979

As numbers are limited on the bus, don't forget to give me a call to book in for any session or day trip that you are interested in attending.

Looking forward to meeting you soon
Renee & the MM Team

Current opportunities:

Intergenerational sessions – Playgroup, Kindergartens, Schools
... and much more – Day Trips, Coffee Catch-ups

Coming soon – Baby Bundles, Men's Coffee and Catch up, Art classes and much more...

Come and join the adventure.

ASK ABOUT 'HOME CARE PACKAGES'



Your gift provides a way to express gratitude, generosity, service, and care for one another through the ministries of St Mark's.

Your continued prayers, participation, and generous financial support are critical to become the Church God desires us to be.

If you are unable to attend our in-person worship you're welcome to support by:

Bank Transfer to

St Marks BSB 704 942 Account 54740
(if LLL account use 100378501)

or

St Marks @ Pacific

BSB: 704 942 Account 116217

(If LLL account use 100612210)

Required monthly \$11,633



Join us for Worship

14 Bombala Tce Caloundra

9.00am weekly service with Holy Communion

(additional service at 10.00am for baptisms)

Everyone is welcome at all services

Our worship services are intergenerational and a blend of traditional and contemporary liturgy and music styles.

CELEBRATING THE PAST PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE.



HOLD ON TO HOPE

Here you see families in Afghanistan forced from their homes and leave everything behind to flee to safety as internally displaced people. They come from Hiland, Kundoz and Orizgan provinces.

ALWS is working with a partner in Afghanistan to help 50,000 families, both within and outside the country, as part of a worldwide church action through ACT Alliance.

DONATE or call 1300 763 407

COMING EVENTS

Monday 6th Sep 7.00pm Bible Study
Tuesday 7th Sept 9.30am Deacons
Tuesday 7th Sept 7.00pm Mission and Vision Team
Wednesday 8th Sep 10.00am FISH
Sunday 12th Sept 10.00am Baptism
Alice Rowlinson
Monday 20th Sept 7.00pm Bible Study
Tuesday 21st Sept Ladies Fellowship
Caboolture
Wednesday 22nd Sep 10.00am FISH



YOUR PRAYERS ARE PRECIOUS

For Afghanistan:

- Girls and women – so fearful of what the future may hold
- The elderly, sick, people with disabilities, children – the most vulnerable, who can be forgotten in crises like this
- Frontline aid workers – safety and wisdom in dealing with difficult situations
- Taliban leadership – that their hearts be moved to lead the country with care and compassion

For our community and world:

- "Soften our hearts and open our minds"
- Protection for Christians living in nations where they are persecuted for their faith
- Those weary from repeated lockdowns
- Keeping our St Mark's vision and mission focused 'What next?'
- Anthony and Kristine Myatt returning to Toowoomba to care for family
- Darryl Hill recovering from recent surgery
- Those not well – Bev Hauser, Joy Hill, June Elsner, Fay Hupfeld
- Those struggling to find accommodation
- Those grieving the death of loved ones from COVID 19 and other illnesses

DEVOTION

"Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness... So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them... God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good.'" -Genesis 1:26-27, 31a

We are bombarded in our society by critique. As students, employees, neighbors, parents, brothers, sisters, and children, we are graded and judged on nearly every aspect of our being. We are told if we "just" shape up and work harder, if we "just" dedicate ourselves to the task at hand, we will: get into the school we want, get the internship we want, kick the addiction, get the raise, the promotion, the body, and the love we crave. The problem is, all this critique makes us forget the most important message of all:

We are created in God's image! God made each of us exactly as we are!

Does this mean God doesn't want us to be our best, most healthy selves? Of course not. God wants us to be happy! But, when we listen to the critique more than the Love, we are missing out on the joy-filled life God wants for us. Do you think God wants you to criticize His work, or be thankful and love His work?

Tonight, find a quiet moment, and spend 10 minutes alone, with God, looking in a mirror. Ask yourself: What is my favourite thing about my personality/soul? What is my favourite thing about my amazing body? What part of me could use God's love and forgiveness? What would God say to me, His beloved child? And then soak in God's sweet whispers.

Dear Lord, help me to remember that You created me to be exactly as I am. You know everything about me, everything! And you love me! Help me to love myself too, Lord. Help me to remember that I am Your child. A child of God! Worthy of love and care and respect.

Contact us:

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