

Missing Piece 1

Sunday 14 November 2021

Call to Worship

Psalm 16

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;

I have no good apart from you."

The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;

I have a goodly heritage.

I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.

I keep the LORD always before me;

because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

You show me the path of life.

In your presence there is fullness of joy;

in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Beneath the Southern Cross

Rev Catherine Burton and Rev Malcolm Gordon.

From the ends of the earth

We will sing; God is here, the kingdom is near

In the Land of the Long White Cloud

Christ to dwell, Immanuel

From north and south, from east and west

Beneath the Southern Cross we rest

Found by One who came for all

In this tale of spacious love we're born

This whenua on which we stand

This holy ground made by God's hand

Marred and scarred yet marked by grace

Held and healed in Christ we find our place

God of nations, at thy feet

In the bonds of love we meet

Strangers once, now called as one

Aotearoa, wake to greet this love

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

We are amazed, God, at our power to learn
Some of us learn science and mathematics
Some of us learn cooking and sewing
Some of us learn to care for plants and animals
Some of us learn to care for people, young and old and in-between
Some learn to listen and others learn to speak
Some learn to swim and others learn to fly
Everyone is different in what they learn, in how they learn
And in our learning we reflect you, your nature hidden within us
We see you at work in our lives
Teaching, guiding, encouraging us as we learn
Sometimes we fail to learn
We return again and again to the same things
Choosing to repeat our mistakes
The lessons lost or ignored
Our vision of Jesus, of his gentle leading
Blurs and fades
Forgive us for those times of selfishness
Help us to continue to learn as you lead
We bring our private confessions before you now...
Know that God pardons all who truly repent
And strengthens us through the Holy Spirit
In Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

Reflection

Words from Mark 10:17-22

Notices

The Peace

My hope is built

Edward Mole

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus Christ, my righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand

When darkness veils His lovely face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil

His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support me in the whelming flood
When all around my soul gives way
He then is all my hope and stay

When He shall come with trumpet sound
Oh, may I then in Him be found
In Him, my righteousness, alone
Faultless to stand before the throne

[Reading](#) Mark 10:17-22

The Rich Man

¹⁷ As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.’ ” ²⁰ He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” ²¹ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” ²² When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

[Message](#) Missing Piece 1

As we dwell in your Word this morning we pray you would open our hearts and our eyes to discern what your Spirit has for us today. Amen.

OK, team, we’re heading out. Have you all packed spare underwear and a toothbrush? Do I need to ask if everyone has been to the toilet – it will be a while before we find a suitable spot. Peter, did you remember to bring extra sunscreen – you know what you’re like when sunburn hits – that red hair and pale skin do you no favours in this climate. And Andrew, have you packed your

lunch? I know the rest likely haven't, but we're used to making do. Now, is there anything else we might have forgotten? No? Then let's get going, we've a long walk ahead of us.

Wait for it, wait for it, here we go. It was definitely feeling too easy. It's alright, let him through. Alright, young man, what do you have to say for yourself?

Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Now, hang on just a moment. Why are you calling me good? You know that only God is good. It's a topic for further conversation, but we'll come back to that another time.

Eternal life? You know what the commandments say – no murder, no adultery, no stealing, no false witnessing, no fraud, oh, and honour your father and mother. They're all there in black and white and there's been general agreement on what they mean for the last few hundred years. It's not like we've been keeping them a secret or anything. So why are you asking me now?

Well, here's the thing. I've been working hard at keeping all the rules. And it has worked out well for me. But I know that there is still something missing. 'I still haven't found what I'm looking for.' I'm not sure what it is, but I know, deep down, that you know.

My friend, you are right, and it is good that you have come to ask. Yes, I know what you are looking for. You have been working on this puzzle your whole life, carefully finding each piece, and putting it in its correct place. You've done well. Yet it hasn't been enough. You sense it in your bones, but you can't quite put your finger on what the problem is. There is something holding you back from fully being the person God has designed you to be.

Here's the thing. All that stuff you have accumulated, the nice house and three cars, the 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom crib with underfloor heating and double glazing all around, the jetboat, the motorhome, the workshop full of tools. You do a wonderful job of looking after your parents. You are generous and you share your plenty. All of that is good. None of it is the point. All that stuff is getting in your way. Every spare moment is tied up in looking after it all and trying to get more which means you don't have the time or the energy to focus on what is most important.

But I have worked hard for all that I have. I look after my workers, and I provide goods and services that other people need and want. Now you're

saying that I have to give it all away? How is that fair or reasonable? I had no idea that eternal life was so difficult. I'm going to have to think about this.

Stepping out of the story now. Over the years I have alternated between sympathy and some level of dislike for this young man. On the one hand, he is presented with a confronting choice that asks him to give up everything he has worked for over the years, although, given he is a young man I often wonder just how much of what he has come from a parent or other benefactor. If you have genuinely worked hard and been successful in what you do, being asked to give it all up is tough. It is even harder when it is for something that you can't even measure or even be confident of receiving. At least with a few dollars you can make yourself comfortable in the life in front of you. So I can identify with his shock and grief.

On the other hand my natural distrust of excess wealth can well up and leave me wanting to say, 'Tough nuts, mate, join the rest of us plebs and stop complaining.'

Neither attitude is helpful in understanding this story because it is not about how I feel about wealth. In fact, the story is not about wealth at all. The story is about the sense of loss we all carry from not being truly connected with God. This young man knew he was missing something. He just didn't know what it was. Even those of us who have invited Jesus into our lives retain a sense of incompleteness. Paul, writing to the Romans puts it this way: "but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies." He recognizes that even though we have accepted Christ as our Saviour and are filled with the Spirit we are not done yet.

In explaining to the young man that he needed give up his wealth to receive eternal life, Jesus was responding to that deep sense of loss this young man was experiencing. That sense of loss wasn't because he was wealthy, it was because his focus had been moved from God to something 'not God'. And it is this 'not God' focus that can affect us all. Wealth, family, work, health, sport, hobbies. When these things become our focus and move God to second place we find Jesus telling us to sell what we have, give it away and follow him. It may not be selling in the commercial sense, rather giving up those things that have led to us finding our hope in, 'not God'. Then, in that space where God is first, we can rediscover our identity as children of God.

For most of us that can be just as difficult as the rich young man found out. It is likely we will be just as shocked and grieved. For me, the hardest part of it is that this shifting of my focus is not something I can do once and then forget about. I, we, need to work at it constantly. To keep dragging ourselves back to focussing on God because the things around us, that if we are honest are all good things because they have been created by a good God, all too easily draw our attention and our focus away from God.

I don't think it is sin, this constantly shifting focus, it is simply human. We are going to dig deeper next week, but I do find it interesting that the disciples were astonished at Jesus answer. They understood how difficult a task he had set the young man. They also understood that in setting it for the young man he was also setting it for them, and for us. Perhaps it is a part of the reason we are told to not stop meeting together – we need each other to encourage and challenge that focus on God. What do you think?

We Pray

God of love, of beauty, of good things, of wonderful creation and creativity, we worship you. We also acknowledge how often our attention is drawn from the maker to the made and we are sorry for that. Help us to learn what it means to give up our wealth, however that may be measured, to gain the treasure in heaven. Amen

Amazing Grace (My chains are gone)

John Newton, Chris Tomlin

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

My chains are gone, I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love, amazing grace

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God, who called me here below
Will be forever mine
Will be forever mine
You are forever mine

Offering

Mighty God, Architect of the Universe; your work of creation and building is always before us! We give our gifts this day in hopes that we might be co-builders with you in the creation of your kingdom here on earth! May our gifts also reach others who are hurting, who feel disconnected from your love, that they too may join us in the stonework of kingdom-building, whose mortar is the sharing of Christ's love with the world. In Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for Ourselves and Others

For the people of St Paul's as they begin to prepare for Rose's time as moderator of the PCANZ

We pray for the more than 650 million living women and girls who, according to UNICEF, were married as children – often married into domestic violence, see their schooling halted, risk death during childbirth and bear infants who have an increased risk of dying before their first month of life. Lord have mercy. We pray especially for Chad, Central African Republic and Niger, who lead the world in these human rights violations.

We pray for support organisations as they gear up for Christmas. For funding, for people to help with the work to be done, for physical resources as they are needed. For wisdom and strength as they carry out their tasks.

We bring our prayers for ourselves and those we know and love, our families, friends, pets. All these things we pray in the name of Jesus the Christ who taught us how to pray...

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, holy be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.
Amen

Christ before me

Christ before me. Christ behind me
Christ above me and below
Christ beside me, Christ within me
Christ around me where e'er I go

Everything is sacred, Everything is blessed
Everyone made worthy to find their holy rest
Everyone belongs here, Everyone is loved
Everyone that's failing, Grace will lift above

Christ before you, Christ behind you
Christ above you and below
Christ beside you, Christ within you
Christ around you where e'er you go

Everything is sacred, Everything is blessed
Everyone made worthy to find their holy rest
Everyone belongs here, Everyone is loved
Every life that's failing, Grace will lift above

Christ before us, Christ behind us
Christ above us and below
Christ beside us, Christ within us
Christ around us where e'er we go

Benediction and Grace

As we go out from here may the God who calls us, ransoms us and sets us free,
enable us to find our focus in Christ and our treasure in heaven.

May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.