# Bethlehem Lutheran Church Wagga Wagga

# 9th Sunday after Pentecost

# 2nd August, 2020

# The Triune God meets with us

## Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters,

### and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! (Isa 55:1a NRSV)

## In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

### Amen

# We confess our sins to God the Father…

## Friends in Christ:

## Let us confess our sins in the presence of God and of each other.

### We confess to you, almighty God, before the whole company of heaven, and to each other, that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, by our own fault.

### Have mercy on us, for Jesus’ sake, forgive us all our sins, and bring us to eternal life. Amen.

# …and God forgives us

## Maythe almighty and merciful Lord grant us pardon and forgiveness of all our sins.

### Amen.

# Jesus leads us as we pray

## The Lord be with you

### And also with you.

## Let us pray for the bread of life. *[silence]*

## Thank you, compassionate God, that your Son healed the sick and fed those who were hungry.

### Satisfy our hunger both for daily bread and for the life-giving bread that lasts forever. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

### Amen.

# 1st Reading – God speaks through his prophets

## **Isaiah 55:1-5** *Invitation to the thirsty*

## 1 “Come, all you who are thirsty,

##  come to the waters;

## and you who have no money,

##  come, buy and eat!

## Come, buy wine and milk

##  without money and without cost.

## 2 Why spend money on what is not bread,

##  and your labour on what does not satisfy?

## Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,

##  and you will delight in the richest of fare.

## 3 Give ear and come to me;

##  listen, that you may live.

## I will make an everlasting covenant with you,

##  my faithful love promised to David.

## 4 See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,

##  a ruler and commander of the peoples.

## 5 Surely you will summon nations you know not,

##  and nations you do not know will come running to you,

## because of the Lord your God,

##  the Holy One of Israel,

##  for he has endowed you with splendour.”

## This is the word of the Lord

### Thanks be to God

# We respond with Psalm 145:8, 9,14-21

## 8 The Lord is gracious and compassionate,

###  slow to anger and rich in love.

## 9 The Lord is good to all;

###  he has compassion on all he has made.

## 14 The Lord upholds all who fall

###  and lifts up all who are bowed down.

## 15 The eyes of all look to you,

###  and you give them their food at the proper time.

## 16 You open your hand

###  and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

## 17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways

###  and faithful in all he does.

## 18 The Lord is near to all who call on him,

###  to all who call on him in truth.

## 19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;

###  he hears their cry and saves them.

## 20 The Lord watches over all who love him,

###  but all the wicked he will destroy.

## 21 My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord.

###  Let every creature praise his holy name

###  for ever and ever.

# 2nd Reading – God speaks through his apostles

## **Romans 9:1-5** *Paul's sorrow for his own people*

## 1 I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. 5 Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

## This is the word of the Lord

### Thanks be to God

# Gospel Reading – God speaks through Jesus

## **Matthew 14:13-21** *Jesus feeds the five thousand*

## 13 When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

## 15 As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

## 16 Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

## 17 “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

## 18 “Bring them here to me,” he said. 19 And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 20 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 21 The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

## This is the gospel of the Lord.Praise to you, O Christ.Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your great compassion.

### Help us to receive your generosity with thanks, and share your gifts with others.

### Amen.

# Children’s Message

# We meditate on the song ‘In Christ Alone’

### 1 In Christ alone my heart is found,

### He is my light, my strength my song;

### This Cornerstone, this solid ground,

### Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.

### What heights of love, what depth of peace,

### When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!

### My comforter, my all in all,

### Here in the love of Christ I stand

### 2 In Christ alone – who took on flesh,

### Fullness of God in helpless babe!

### This gift of love and righteousness,

### Scorned by the ones he came to save:

### Till on that cross as Jesus died,

### The wrath of God was satisfied –

### For every sin on him was laid;

### Here in the death of Christ I live.

### 3 There in the ground His body lay,

### Light of the world by darkness slain;

### Then bursting forth in glorious day,

### Up from the grave He rose again!

### And as He stands in victory,

### Sin’s curse has lost its grip on me;

### For I am His and He is mine –

### Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

### 4 No guilt in life, no fear in death –

### This is the pow’r of Christ in me;

### From life’s first cry to final breath,

### Jesus commands my destiny.

### No pow’r of hell, no scheme of man,

### Can ever pluck me from His hand;

### Till He returns or calls me home –

### Here in the pow’r of Christ I’ll stand.

### No pow’r of hell, no scheme of man,

### Can ever pluck me from His hand;

### Till He returns or calls me home –

### Here in the pow’r of Christ I’ll stand.

#### Words and Music: Keith Getty & Stuart Townend

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# God speaks to us

## *The LCA provides this sermon edited for lay-reading, with thanks to the original author.*

## *The Text: Genesis 32:22-31*

## Today’s Old Testament reading gives us an insight into the colourful life of Jacob. His life was filled with drama, deception and struggles.

## This struggle began even before he was born. When Jacob was in his mother’s womb he was not alone. He shared the confined space with his brother, Esau. There the two boys jostled with each other and caused their mother lots of distress. At their birth, the first child born was called Esau. His name described the hairiness of his body and the redness of his skin. The second child born was named Jacob. His name described the fact that he was born grasping onto the heel of his brother.

## The name Jacob also means: “he deceives” or “the deceiver.” To deceive is to mislead someone–to make someone believe something is true when it is really false.

## This had been the story of his life right up until the point where we meet him in today’s reading. Up until this point, he had misled his brother into giving up his birthright. He had misled his father into thinking that he was Esau in order to get the birthright. When Esau heard about this he became angry and said: ‘Jacob has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he’s taken my blessing’.

## Later when Jacob went to get a wife from the daughters of his uncle Laban, the tables were turned and Jacob was misled. He worked for seven years expecting to receive the beautiful Rachel as his wife. Instead, in the dark of night, Laban gave Jacob his eldest daughter, Leah. When morning came Jacob realised that he had been deceived. Jacob went and complained to Laban, saying: ‘What is it that you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?’ Then Laban agreed to also give Rachel to Jacob in return for another seven years work.

## While living in Laban’s territory Jacob fathered eleven sons: six sons from Leah, his first wife; two sons from Leah’s maid servant; two sons from Rachel’s maid servant; and one son from his second wife, Rachel.

## Still, Jacob lived up to his name as ‘the deceiver’. Laban wanted Jacob to stay and live the region of Haran. But Jacob had received a vision from God to return to his home land. Once he had grown in wealth he deceived Laban by running away without telling him. When Laban realized this he went after Jacob. When he finally caught up, Laban said to him: ‘You deceived me’.

## Further on, it came the time from Jacob to meet his brother, Esau. Jacob was not looking forward to this meeting. He thought that Esau might still be angry with him and try to kill him! And so Jacob was full of fear. And now comes our text for today!

## Its night time and Jacob sent his two wives, two maidservants, his eleven sons, servants and all his possessions across to the other side of the river Jabbok. Jacob is almost ready to meet his brother. But before this meeting takes place, he is confronted with another meeting that is just as important. In the dark of night when Jacob was all alone, he was confronted by a dreaded stranger with divine qualities. Who was Jacob wrestling with all night?

## Well, the narrator doesn’t tell us much. The two seem to be evenly matched. But the hidden one showed that he had power to disable Jacob at will. With a simple touch this mysterious one was able to dislocate Jacob’s hip.

## After a long, silent wrestle through the night, the mysterious one speaks first. Breathlessly they enter into a desperate conversation:

## The mysterious one says: ‘Let me go, for the day is breaking’.

## Jacob says: ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me’.

## The mysterious one says: ‘What is your name?’

## Jacob says: ‘Jacob’.

## Then the mysterious one says: ‘Your name will no more be called Jacob but Israel for you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome’.

## Then Jacob says: ‘Please tell me your name’.

## The man responds: ‘Why do you ask my name?’

## Then the man blessed him there!

## So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ’It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.’

## What a moment that must have been—to be able to afterwards look back and say: ‘I wrestled with God and lived!’ Surely this was God at work! Jacob wrestled with God looking for more blessing – perhaps more security, land or sons. But what he got was a new identity. No longer is he known as the heel, the trickster, the deceiver. Now God gave Jacob a new beginning and a new name. His new name is Israel. Many interpret this name to be a declaration of praise that ‘God rules, God preserves or God protects’.

## A new being has been called forth. Jacob, now Israel, has faced God, has been touched by God, and survived! He gained a blessing and was renamed. When daylight came the man was gone.

## And all that remained was Israel (who had not had a good night’s sleep). Through this encounter, something of the power of God has been entrusted to the man now known as Israel.

## Think about this: Out of this encounter, struggle and pain came a new direction and a new identity.

## Jacob wanted great things – the blessings of wealth and luxury and prosperity. He wanted to be blessed so that he could find success and be his own god. He once tried to gain this by deceiving people who were close to him. But then in fear he fled—firstly from Esau and then from Laban. But now God has given Jacob a new identity as Israel and new strength to face the fears of the future with praise to God for God’s protection.

## Like Jacob, our past can be filled with deception, and this can cause us to fear and fight for our future. But as we encounter God, he does something rather unexpected – he turns fear into faith that gives praise to God.

## Where do we wrestle with God? Through prayer and meditation on the word of God we wrestle with God. God forgives our sin and gives us a new identity and mindset and a new way of living. Our God is a God of great surprise and mystery.

## As we wrestle with God, seeking and searching for answers in the midst of whatever lies we may be living out, God responds to us reminding us that he cares. God cares for us just as he showed Jacob that he alone is the God who cares.

## This story of Jacob can give us some guidance as we consider our future. Our own human nature leads us to think it is easier for us to be narrow-minded and think about what we need to do, even if it means deceiving others in order to try and gain the blessing for ourselves. Like Jacob we naturally have our eyes fixed on receiving the blessing of wealth and riches. And it is easy to live like Jacob, deceiving others and ourselves into order to gain the things that we think will bless us.

## But true blessing comes from meeting God face to face. The blessings that only God can give us are forgiveness of our sin, a new identity and a new hope to face the future.

## God continues to come to us in powerful, life changing ways though his word and through the waters of baptism. We could consider our baptism as a moment when God wrestled with us. He won the wrestle and drowned our old nature and gave us a new identity as his children.

## As we go about our daily life and continue to engage with God’s word, God’s powerful Spirit works to show us the life-changing power of his grace shaping us to be his people—his holy nation; his royal priesthood; his communion of saints; his new Israel. In baptism God has made us his children and gives us an eternal inheritance that we could never gain by deception or effort. All we can do is receive it with joy and thanksgiving.

## We may often wrestle in the darkness of our own minds because our deceptive ways have gotten the better of us and we have lost sight of God’s grace. We may deceive ourselves into thinking we are not worthy of God’s love, or if only I tried harder things would be ok. But Jesus keeps coming to us in our wrestle to shine his light on us to remind us of our new identity in him. He ensures us that we are no longer in eternal bondage to sin, for he has bound himself to us!

## Jesus has dealt with our lies and deception when he defeated the powers of sin, death and the devil in his death and resurrection. And now each day we can step forward into the new day with a new starting point. We can start each day, not with the flaws and sins of our past to haunt us, but we can start again in our new identity as his children and celebrate the gifts of faith, hope and love.

## And just as Israel now bears the mark of a displaced hip after his wrestle with God and discovered God’s renewing grace, so after we have experienced the grace of God in our baptism, we receive a different mark—the sign of the cross—as a reminder that we have not gained God’s blessing on our own merits. Rather, God’s blessing is ours because of the mercy of God displayed in the cross of Jesus. So stop deceiving yourself into thinking you need to be good enough to receive his blessing. Stop trying to be someone you are not. For God loves you for you!

## Friends in Christ, as we seek the best for our future, may we daily declare that God is the one who blesses, preserves and protects us in ways in which we could never experience without him. He is our creator—we are his. He loves us more than words…yet tells us of his love in his word! We are called to live our lives in worship of him by doing his will.

## As we daily consider God’s will for us, let us put aside all the ways we deceive ourselves and others. Let us willingly enter into a daily holy wrestle with God by asking for his guidance, listening to his voice in the word, conversing with God in prayer, and then stepping out in faith. For through this holy wrestle, God will continue to reveal his will for us and in his grace will constantly remind us of all the blessings that are ours because of the new identity he gave us in baptism.

## Stop running. God cannot be deceived. His love for you is greater than any lie you have ever lived.

## And the peace of God which passes all human understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen

# We confess our faith in the Triune God

### I believe in God, the Father almighty,

### maker of heaven and earth.

### And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

### who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

### born of the Virgin Mary,

### suffered under Pontius Pilate,

### was crucified, dead, and buried.

### He descended into hell.

### The third day he rose again from the dead.

### He ascended into heaven,

### and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty,

### from thence he will come to judge the living and the dead.

### I believe in the Holy Spirit,

### the holy catholic\* church,

### the communion of saints,

### the forgiveness of sins,

### the resurrection of the body,

### and the life everlasting.

### Amen.

#### \* ‘catholic’ here meaning 'universal'

# We meditate on the hymn ‘Now Thank we all our God’

### 1 Now thank we all our God

### with hearts and hands and voices,

### such wonders He has done,

### in Him the world rejoices;

### who from our mothers' arms

### has blessed us on our way

### with countless gifts of love,

### and still is ours today.

### 2 O may this bounteous God

### through all our life be near us,

### to fill our hearts with joy

### and with His peace to cheer us.

### To keep us in His grace,

### and guide us when perplexed,

### and free us from all ills

### in this world and the next.

### 3 All praise and thanks to God

### who reigns in highest heaven,

### to Father and to Son

### and Spirit now be given:

### the one eternal God,

### whom heaven and earth adore,

### for so it was is now,

### and shall be evermore.

#### Nun danket alle Gott

#### Martin Rinckart 1586-1649

#### Tr Catherine Winkworth (1858), alt.

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# We give of ourselves

## Lord, we thank you for giving us not only what we need, but much more.

### Help us joyfully to accept your good gifts, especially life and fellowship with you, and to share your gifts with others. Make us generous and self-giving.

### Amen.

# We pray for others

## *God has made us his people and given us his Spirit. So let us pray for all the people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all the people in the world.*

## Almighty God, heavenly Father: We thank and praise you for all your good gifts to us – food and clothing, home and family, daily work, and all we need from day to day. Thank you that through these, you are good to us every moment of the day. Help us to see your goodness and give praise to you with a thankful heart. Lead us to share your goodness with others through our daily vocation.

## Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

## Grant that your holy church may be the bearers of your new creation throughout the world. Give all pastors grace to preach your re-creative word with power. Move your people to support the work of your church through their offerings and through being involved in the various programs of our congregation/parish. Bless our Bishop (insert name) with the gifts necessary to fulfill his calling.

## Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

## We thank you for your good gift of peace and stability in our country. Bless our elected leaders with truth, wisdom and justice. Help all leaders in politics and society, culture and industry, to be agents of good and blessing to the community.

## Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

## Bless the work of Lutheran World Service as it helps less fortunate communities develop regular means of sustenance. Help us who have been abundantly blessed to share what we have with those who hunger and thirst. And give those communities sun and rain in right measure for the growing of healthy harvests.

## Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

## Bless and help those among us who are sick, in need, or who suffer in some way. Help them with your Holy Spirit, so they may accept your fatherly will and rejoice in your saving help.

## Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

## Heavenly Father, you show your loving care for the whole world, and your Son satisfied the needs of the five thousand. In your great goodness answer our prayers; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

### Amen.

# We pray the prayer of Jesus

### Our Father in heaven,

### hallowed 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.

### Lead us not into temptation,

### but deliver us from evil. *Matt 6:9-13*

### For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

# The Triune God sends us out with blessing

## May Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shine on us and make us ready to meet him when he comes in glory.

## And the blessing of almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with us always.

### **Amen**.

# We meditate on the hymn ‘What A Friend We Have’

### 1 What a friend we have in Jesus

### all our sins and griefs to bear,

### what a privilege to carry

### everything to God in prayer:

### O what peace we often forfeit,

### O what needless pain we bear,

### all because we do not carry

### everything to God in prayer.

### 2 Have we trials and temptations,

### is there trouble anywhere?

### We should never be discouraged:

### take it to the Lord in prayer.

### Can we find a friend so faithful

### who will all our sorrows share?

### Jesus knows our every weakness:

### take it to the Lord in prayer.

### 3 Are we weak and heavy-laden,

### cumbered with a load of care?

### Precious Saviour still our refuge:

### take it to the Lord in prayer.

### Do your friends despise, forsake thee?

### Take it to the Lord in prayer;

### in his arms he'll take and shield there,

### you will find a solace there.

#### Joseph Medlicott Scriven

#### 1819-86 alt.

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# Announcements