# Bethlehem Lutheran Church Wagga Wagga

# 13th Sunday after Pentecost

# 30th August, 2020

# We prepare ourselves for worship ’10,000 Reasons’

### *Bless the Lord oh my soul*

### *Oh my soul*

### *Worship His Holy name*

### *Sing like never before*

### *Oh my soul*

### *I'll worship Your Holy name*

### 1 The sun comes up

### It's a new day dawning

### It's time to sing Your song again

### Whatever may pass

### And whatever lies before me

### Let me be singing

### When the evening comes

### *Bless the Lord oh my soul*

### *Oh my soul*

### *Worship His Holy name*

### *Sing like never before*

### *Oh my soul*

### *I'll worship Your Holy name*

### 2 You're rich in love

### And You're slow to anger

### Your name is great

### And Your heart is kind

### For all Your goodness

### I will keep on singing

### Ten thousand reasons

### For my heart to find

### *Bless the Lord oh my soul*

### *Oh my soul*

### *Worship His Holy name*

### *Sing like never before*

### *Oh my soul*

### *I'll worship Your Holy name*

### 3 And on that day

### When my strength is failing

### The end draws near

### And my time has come

### Still my soul will

### Sing Your praise unending

### Ten thousand years

### And then forevermore

### *Bless the Lord oh my soul*

### *Oh my soul*

### *Worship His Holy name*

### *Sing like never before*

### *Oh my soul*

### *I'll worship Your Holy name*

### *Bless the Lord oh my soul*

### *Oh my soul*

### *Worship His Holy name*

### *Sing like never before*

### *Oh my soul*

### *I'll worship Your Holy name*

### *Yes I'll worship Your Holy name*

### *Lord I'll worship Your Holy name*

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# The Triune God meets with us

## Jesus said: ‘If any want to become my followers,

### let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow  me.’ Matt 16:24

## 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 dedication to Christ. *[silence]*

## Thank you, loving Lord Jesus, for freely giving your life for our sake.

### Make us your faithful followers, ready to take up our cross and follow in your steps. For you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

### Amen.

# 1st Reading – God speaks through his prophets

## **Jeremiah 15:15–21** *Jeremiah's inner struggle*

## 15 Lord, you understand;

##  remember me and care for me.

##  Avenge me on my persecutors.

## You are long-suffering – do not take me away;

##  think of how I suffer reproach for your sake.

## 16 When your words came, I ate them;

##  they were my joy and my heart’s delight,

## for I bear your name,

##  Lord God Almighty.

## 17 I never sat in the company of revellers,

##  never made merry with them;

## I sat alone because your hand was on me

##  and you had filled me with indignation.

## 18 Why is my pain unending

##  and my wound grievous and incurable?

## You are to me like a deceptive brook,

##  like a spring that fails.

## 19 Therefore this is what the Lord says:

## ‘If you repent, I will restore you

##  that you may serve me;

## if you utter worthy, not worthless, words,

##  you will be my spokesman.

## Let this people turn to you,

##  but you must not turn to them.

## 20 I will make you a wall to this people,

##  a fortified wall of bronze;

## they will fight against you

##  but will not overcome you,

## for I am with you

##  to rescue and save you,’

## declares the Lord.

## 21 ‘I will save you from the hands of the wicked

##  and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel.’

## This is the word of the Lord

### Thanks be to God

# We respond with Psalm 26:1-8

## 1 Vindicate me, Lord,

##  for I have led a blameless life;

### I have trusted in the Lord

###  and have not faltered.

## 2 Test me, Lord, and try me,

##  examine my heart and my mind;

### 3 for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love

###  and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness.

## 4 I do not sit with the deceitful,

###  nor do I associate with hypocrites.

## 5 I abhor the assembly of evildoers

###  and refuse to sit with the wicked.

## 6 I wash my hands in innocence,

###  and go about your altar, Lord,

## 7 proclaiming aloud your praise

###  and telling of all your wonderful deeds.

## 8 Lord, I love the house where you live,

###  the place where your glory dwells.

# 2nd Reading – God speaks through his apostles

## **Romans 12:9–21** *Living in love*

## 9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practise hospitality.

## 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

## 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

## ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

##  if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

## In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’

## 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## This is the word of the Lord

### Thanks be to God

# Gospel Reading – God speaks through Jesus

## **Matthew 16:21–28** *Jesus speaks about his death and discipleship*

## 21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

## 22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’

## 23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.’

## 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

## 28 ‘Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.’

## This is the gospel of the Lord.Praise to you, O Christ.Thank you, Lord Jesus, for giving up everything and dying for us.

### Help us to forget ourselves, carry our cross, and follow you.

### Amen.

# Children’s Message

# We meditate on the song ‘Follow Me’

### *Anyone who wants to come with me,*

### *deny yourself, take up your cross*

### *and follow me, follow me,*

### *follow me, follow me.*

### 1 Follow me to the ugly edges,

### leave the comfortable zone;

### follow me to the broken borders -

### where I am is your home.

### You'll never walk alone.

### *Anyone who wants to come with me,*

### *deny yourself, take up your cross*

### *and follow me, follow me,*

### *follow me, follow me.*

### 2 Jesus, lead me to where you want me,

### help me hear what you say;

### take my fear of the unfamiliar,

### build my trust every day.

### I want to go your way.

### *Anyone who wants to come with me,*

### *deny yourself, take up your cross*

### *and follow me, follow me,*

### *follow me, follow me.*

### Lose your life and save it,

### give it up and get it back.

### Lose your life and save it,

### give it up and get it back.

### Lose your life and save it,

### give it up and get it back.

### Lose your life and save it,

### give it up and get it back.

#### Words and music: Robin Mann

#### @1994 Robin Mann, 54 Currawong Crescent, Modbury Heights

#### SA 5092.

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# God speaks to us

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

## *Sermon for Proper 17A - The text: Matthew 16:24–25*

## A young man graduated from university and was finishing his first day at work with one of the big firms in the city. This was a dream come true. Here he was putting on his coat at the end of his first day. The experience had been a bit overwhelming with so many new people and new things to learn, but it was also exhilarating. This was the climax of all his years of study at school and university. He had every right to congratulate himself for getting to this point – the boss had said that he would be one of the bright executive stars of tomorrow.

## As he was leaving the building, he bumped into several of the people he had met during the day, and they invited him to join them for a drink to celebrate his first day at work. He was in a celebratory mood, so why not? They went to a bar – not the classiest place in town – but he didn’t think any more of it. He was new to town, and he trusted his new friends.

## As the evening went on, a couple of his friends offered him a celebratory fix of some of the ‘stuff’ they happened to have handy. The young man politely refused the offer and was about to leave when one of his new found friends offered to pay for some female company. When he refused again, they made it quite clear that he was acting weird, so he left the bar and went back to his unit.

## The next day his overseer called him to his office. He had heard about what had happened the previous night and wondered why he didn’t join in the celebrations. The young man didn't know quite where to start and just blurted out, “I just don’t do those sorts of things”.

## ‘Why?’ asked the overseer.

## ‘You see’, the young man said, ‘I'm a Christian, and that sort of thing goes against what I believe’.

## Now in saying ‘I'm a Christian’, this young man wasn't saying he was some sort of standout-in-a-crowd holy person. He did go to church fairly regularly, but he was no great student of the Bible. Yet in refusing to go along with the crowd, in standing up and saying ‘I'm a Christian’, he began a journey down a harder path that few wish to walk and few find comfortable. He decided on a course of action that made him different, or weird, if you like. A few weeks later, he was told there was no longer a position available for him. This young man had taken up his cross and followed Jesus.

## Jesus knew as he walked down the narrow road to Jerusalem that there was no way for him to be faithful to the purposes of God and avoid the cross. He said to his disciples, ‘I must go to Jerusalem and suffer much from the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. I will be put to death, but three days later I will be raised to life’ (verses 21–23). He had talked a lot about loving God with all your heart, soul and mind and loving your neighbour as you love yourself. Now it was time to not just talk about love but to put love to the ultimate test.

## He had talked a lot about the kingdom of God, but now it was time to not just talk but to bring the kingdom of God into the hearts and lives of all people through his death and resurrection. Now was the time to bring the reconciliation and righteousness God had promised through the cross outside Jerusalem.

## And surely today's text is meant to say that there is no way for us to be faithful to the purposes of Jesus and at the same time avoid our cross. Jesus speaks plainly, ‘If any one of you want to come with me, you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me’ (verse 24).

## The words ‘forget yourself’ or ‘deny yourself’ are really radical. They are easy to say but not so easy to do. When Jesus calls Matthew to follow him, there is an instant reaction. There is total obedience. Matthew takes the step to go the harder road and follow Jesus. When Jesus speaks to the rich man who wants to know how to be saved, Jesus tells him to leave behind what’s dearest to him – his riches – and step out and follow. But to go down that road proves too hard for him.

## Discipleship involves letting go, leaving behind, and giving up everything that stands between Jesus and us – following without conditions. It means not knowing where Jesus will lead, or what the consequences will be of following him, and not considering what others will think. Discipleship requires determination – when the going gets tough obedience calls us to stay with Jesus, his church, the people who are fellow disciples with us. Jesus is calling us to encourage and help one another realise what he is calling us to do as his holy people, the church.

## Discipleship means nothing less than total and complete obedience to Jesus. Discipleship means we place ourselves at Jesus’ disposal. His plans are our plans; his will is our will; his ways are our ways. Make no mistake about it; Jesus is saying to his followers that becoming a disciple is a radical step, and being a disciple demands radical commitment: ‘If any one of you wants to come with me, you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me.’

## The cross Jesus took up meant suffering, ridicule and pain. He took up his cross willingly in obedience to his Father. Likewise, when Jesus talks about a disciple carrying a cross, he means that it will involve sacrifice, dedication, making choices, facing ridicule, suffering and pain, but a disciple gladly takes it up because of his or her commitment to Jesus and in obedience to Jesus’ call to follow him. The disciple gladly carries the cross and whatever it may bring, because we have been brought into a new relationship with our Heavenly Father and this newness is expressed in forgetting ourselves, turning away from selfishness and self-centredness, denying our need to always want our own way and to always be at the centre of things, forgetting our own priorities and putting the needs of others first.

## This kind of forgetting oneself can show itself in a myriad of ways, and Paul gives a few examples in Romans 12. He says: ‘Love must be completely sincere … Love one another warmly as Christians, and be eager to show respect for one another … Serve the Lord with a heart full of devotion … Share your belongings with your needy fellow Christians, and open your homes to strangers … If someone has done you wrong, do not repay him with a wrong. Never get revenge … Try to do what everyone considers to be good … If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them a drink.’

## Just in this one passage alone there is fair amount of forgetting your own needs and putting the needs of others first, even the needs of your enemies and even your need to get revenge or seek justice or to get one up on those you don’t like.

## Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born to a well-to-do north German family. He had always had everything given to him on a silver spoon – a loving, affluent family, superior educational advantages, good looks, and good sense. Yet Bonhoeffer, unlike most of his fellow German Christians, knew when it was time for him to lay aside all that and to take the harder path of the cross. He was hanged by the Nazis. Earlier, he had written, ‘The cross is laid on every Christian ... When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die’ and ‘Suffering is the badge of true discipleship. The disciple is not above his master’ (The Cost of Discipleship).

## Bonhoeffer's life illustrates that Christians don't go looking for a cross to bear. If we're faithful, the world will offer us one, sooner or later. As Christians are in the business of following Jesus, the world is in the business of crucifixion. Or as the Jesuit Daniel Berrigan once said, ‘If you want to follow Jesus, you had better look good on wood’.

## We all know from experience that it's not easy to deny oneself, take up a cross and follow Jesus. It's far easier to avoid conflict with those around us and to keep quiet and go with the flow than it is to stand out and let people know that ‘I'm a Christian’, as the young man in my opening story did, or Bonhoeffer and countless others, regardless of the consequences. It is not easy to follow Christ and be regarded as a fool. We will fail, and we will get it wrong. We will adopt the worldly attitude of ‘me first’ over against Jesus’ command to put the needs of others first. We will need to come seeking our Lord's forgiveness for our failure to forget ourselves, to be loyal, faithful, committed and follow Christ, and he will overwhelm us with his grace.

## In short, when Jesus calls us to discipleship, he is calling us to follow the harder path, to make the harder decisions, to make the tough commitment to carry the cross of being his disciples today in this community. May God's grace inspire us and his Spirit guide us as we forget ourselves, take up our crosses and follow him.

## Jesus calls his people to follow him by dying to themselves like he did. Peter is offended at Jesus’ words. Jesus is choosing the harder path, the path of obedience, the path of suffering and dying. And Peter doesn't like it. It's scandalous to think that the Saviour should lose every dignity and honour, even lose his own life, let alone lose it on a cross, an instrument of shame and dishonour and death. Peter had always thought of Jesus overcoming his enemies with glory and honour, not being despised and rejected and being put to death at the hands of his enemies. This harder path was not part of Peter’s thinking at all.

## Jesus was able to accomplish all that he did on the cross because of his unchanging attitude, and his commitment to carry out his Father's plan of salvation. He gave no thought for his own safety, he didn’t have any private ambition that excluded God or his fellow man, and he had only one thing in mind.

## You might say he was totally dedicated to doing what he was sent to do, and not even the rebuke of Peter was going to put him off, as tempting as it might be to take an easier way out. Jesus went to the cross for you, so that you might find your life as his disciple and a child of God in the kingdom of heaven forever. 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 song ‘Open the Eyes of my Heart’

### Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

### Open the eyes of my heart

### I want to see You

### I want to see You

### Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

### Open the eyes of my heart

### I want to see You

### I want to see You

### *To see you high and lifted up*

### *Shining in the light of Your glory*

### *Pour out Your power and love*

### *As we sing holy, holy, holy*

### Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

### Open the eyes of my heart

### I want to see You

### I want to see You

### Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

### Open the eyes of my heart

### I want to see You

### I want to see You

### *To see you high and lifted up*

### *Shining in the light of Your glory*

### *Pour out Your power and love*

### *As we sing holy, holy, holy*

### *To see you high and lifted up*

### *Shining in the light of Your glory*

### *Pour out Your power and love*

### *As we sing holy, holy, holy*

### Holy, holy, holy

### Holy, holy, holy

### Holy, holy, holy

### I want to see You

### Holy, holy, holy

### Holy, holy, holy

### Holy, holy, holy

### I want to see You

#### Paul Baloche

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# We give of ourselves

## We thank you, Lord God, that your Son gave up his life for our sake.

### Lead us who are his followers to take up our cross and follow him. Help us to give of ourselves and all we have in your service.

### Amen.

# We pray for others

## *Let us pray to our heavenly Father that his love would be seen throughout the world and evil be overcome.*

## Almighty God and Father, we thank you for all your goodness, and especially for the gift of your dear Son, through whom you have revealed your will and grace. Plant your word in us, and help us to keep it in our hearts so that we bear much fruit.

## Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

## Heavenly Father, bring healing and comfort for people around the world suffering from Coronavirus COVID-19. Speed their recovery and slow the spread of the virus. We thank you for the efforts of all those involved in treating, testing and caring for patients, and ask your protection over them as they go about their work. Give wisdom to governments around the world as they manage this outbreak. We ask for your peace when we are tempted to panic or become anxious about this disease. Help us to place our trust in you, knowing that our life is safely hidden in you and that you are the Lord of all creation. Enable us to show your love to others, sharing the hope we have in you, praying and caring for the sick and needy as best we can in the name of Christ.

## Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

## Protect and strengthen your church, so that your word and sacraments may nurture faith in you and love to all people. Be with all who spread the light of your truth throughout the world. Bless Australian Lutheran College and all the schools of the church, so that they may send out people to serve you by proclaiming your word, by helping others, and by doing your will in their daily lives. Let the light of your word continue to shine in our homes. Keep the children of the church in the grace of their baptism, and help all who care for them to bring them up to trust and obey you. Have mercy on the enemies of your church, so that they may repent and live.

## Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

## Bless all those in government and positions of authority. We pray for the legal system: judges, lawyers, courts, juries, penal and corrective institutions and personnel. Help them to govern wisely and justly, so that people may be restrained from wrongdoing and encouraged to live good lives. Provide for asylum seekers and refugees, for the poor and needy, and for all who are disadvantaged. To this end let your blessing rest on Lutheran Community Care, its director and staff, and all the work it engages in.

## Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

## We place in your care all who are in trouble. Remember those in need, those who are sick, and especially those who suffer because they bear your name. By your Holy Spirit, help your people to forgive those who hurt them, and so bear witness to your great love.

## Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

## Heavenly Father, we flee to you in this time of crisis, seeking your protection and comfort. Grant us peace and calm in the midst of this storm, Lord, and help us to place our trust in you.

## Lord God, thank you for health care workers and all those who place themselves in harm’s way to provide for our daily needs. Protect them as they go about their duties and give them rest and relief from the strain they carry.

## Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

## Be with those who mourn the death of a loved one. Strengthen them with the message of your Son’s resurrection and comfort them with your love.

## Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

## Lord God, you have defeated evil and sin and death through the death of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. In mercy hear the prayers we bring to you in his name, for he 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 ‘Take My Life’

### 1 Take my life and let me be,

### consecrated Lord to Thee

### Take my moments and my days,

### let them flow in ceaseless praise.

### 2 Take my hands, and let them move

### at the impulse of Thy love.

### Take my feet, and let them be,

### swift and beautiful for Thee.

### 3 Take my voice, and let me sing

### always, only, for my king.

### Take my lips, and let them be,

### filled with messages from Thee.

### 4 Take my silver and my gold;

### not a mite would I withhold.

### Take my intellect, and use

### every power as Thou shalt choose.

### 5 Take my will and make it Thine;

### it shall be no longer mine.

### Take my heart; it is Thine own,

### it shall be Thy royal throne.

### 6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour

### at Thy feet its treasure store.

### Take myself, and I will be

### ever only all for Thee.

#### Frances Ridley Havergal, 1836-79, alt.

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# Announcements