



THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Third Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2019

Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org

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Pray

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



Have you ever done anything you believed to be right and then had it proven to you that you were so far off the mark that it was difficult to calculate how far off you were? With their faces in their hands, the countenance of the Judeans and all who live in Jerusalem had fallen to one of its lowest points when Peter said: ³⁶Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.’ What a slap in the face for each one of them! After Peter’s powerful, Spirit-filled message, the people were deeply moved and asked, “What shall we do?” this is, of course, the basic question all of us must ask. It is not enough to be sorry for our sins – we must let GOD forgive them – and then we must live like forgiven people. The Gospel message is to repent and be baptised. As

we know, to repent means to TURN AWAY from sin – changing the direction of our lives from selfishness and rebellion against GOD’s laws and TURNING TO CHRIST – depending on Him for forgiveness, mercy, guidance and purpose. We cannot save ourselves – only GOD can do that. Baptism identifies us WITH CHRIST and with the community of believers. It is a condition of discipleship and a sign of faith.

Our psalm teaches us that we can always reach GOD through prayer. The psalmist’s love for GOD had grown because he had experienced answers to his prayers. GOD listens to all our prayers and answers them in His perfect timing. Yesterday was ANZAC Day and verse 15 of this psalm tells us: **Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His faithful servants.** GOD stays close to us even in death. When someone we love is nearing death, we may become angry and feel abandoned. But believers – GOD’s faithful servants – are precious to GOD, and He carefully chooses the time when they will be called into His presence. Let this truth provide comfort

when you have lost a loved one. GOD sees all, and each life is valuable to Him. On Thursday evening's ABC news there was a story of a World War 2 digger – aged 100 – from Grafton, who was absolutely gutted that the commemoration of ANZAC Day – in its usual form – had been cancelled this year. That digger's name is Henry "Corky" Caldwell and he happens to be my godfather. Henry was an auto-electrician by trade and was deployed to the army engineers to repair the vehicles of war – in some cases having to clean out "bits" of his mates injured or killed in war. ^The ABC news story and the story on the front page of yesterday's Telegraph describe a man who gave much in the service of his country and his community. From a Facebook post by his daughter describing how disappointed he was that there would be no official ANZAC Day commemoration, to one returned serviceman talking to one of his mates, who talked to one of his mates, he was taken for a ride in a WW2 Army Jeep around Grafton – which ended up at the cenotaph where he laid a wreath of Australian native

flowers. He then said: “It sort of gets you a bit, doesn’t it – remembering his brothers and his wife (my godmother and 4th class teacher) – who died only 4 weeks ago at 95y.o. He has precious memories of his brothers – who went to war with him and of course his wife of 74 years, Gloria. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His faithful servants.

Under the heading of BE HOLY, the imminent return of CHRIST should motivate us to live FOR Him. We need to be alert, disciplined and focussed. Our GOD is a GOD of mercy and justice who cares personally for each of his followers – a GOD who expects us to imitate Him by following His high moral standards. Like Him, we should be both merciful and just – and sacrifice ourselves for others. Peter tells us that we must be holy in everything we do. Holiness means being totally devoted, totally dedicated to GOD. How do we do this? We cannot do this on our own; but GOD gives us His Holy Spirit to help us obey and to give us power to overcome sin.

CHRIST's sacrifice for our sins was not an after-thought, not something GOD decided to do when the world spun out of control. The plan was set in motion by the all-knowing, eternal GOD long before the world was created – assuring Jewish believers that the law was not being scrapped because it didn't work; but that both the law and the coming of CHRIST were part of GOD's eternal plan. Peter ends by quoting from Isaiah 40: 6-8 – reminding believers that everything in this life – possessions, accomplishments, people – will eventually fade away and disappear. Only GOD's will, Word and work are permanent – on which we should focus our time, money and energy.

In our Gospel passage for today, JESUS appears to two believers returning to Emmaus – who at first missed the significance of history's greatest event because they were too focussed on their disappointments and problems. In fact, they didn't recognise JESUS when He was walking beside them. To compound the problem, they were walking in the wrong direction – away from the

fellowship of believers in Jerusalem. We are likely to miss JESUS and withdraw from the strength found in other believers when we become preoccupied with our dashed hopes and frustrated plans. Only when we look for JESUS in our midst will we experience the power and help only He can bring.

Bad news travels fast – the news of JESUS’ crucifixion had spread all throughout the region. The disciples from Emmaus, like many others, had been counting on JESUS to redeem Israel – in a military and political way. What they didn’t realise – and what many don’t realise in 2020 is that JESUS – the Messiah – came to redeem people from slavery to sin. When JESUS was crucified, many lost all hope. They didn’t understand that JESUS’ death – and resurrection offered the greatest hope possible. There were a lot more than Thomas who doubted and didn’t believe. Today, the resurrection still catches people by surprise. In spite of 2000 years of evidence and witness, many people refuse to believe. What more will it take? For these disciples it took the

presence of the living, breathing JESUS in their midst. For many people today, it will take the presence of living, breathing Christians.

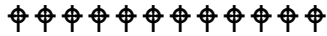
Even though these Jewish men knew the biblical prophecies well, they failed to understand that CHRIST's suffering was His path to glory. They could not understand why GOD had not intervened to save JESUS from the cross. They were so blinded by the world's admiration of political power and military might that they were unprepared for the reversal of values in GOD's kingdom – that the last will be first; and that life grows out of death. The world has not changed its values: a suffering servant is no more popular today than 2000 years ago. The situation is this: we not only have, on the one hand, the witness of the Old Testament prophets but the witness of the New Testament apostles and the history of the Christian Church all pointing to JESUS' victory over death – OR – on the other hand, the world's attitude of foolishly continuing to be baffled by JESUS' Good News. JESUS cleared the confusion of the 2

disciples by doing what we all need to do – He spent time in the Word – explaining how He fulfilled these Scriptures in His ministry. It’s not always easy to understand what the Bible means – so we can turn to other believers who know the Bible and have the wisdom to apply it to our situation. Think of Peter. He felt completely unworthy after 3 times denying his LORD. Thankfully, Peter repented, JESUS approached him and forgave him. The first half of the Acts of the Apostles is testament to how GOD used Peter in building CHRIST’s church.



Anzac Day is an incredibly special and significant day in Australia’s calendar. I have already spoken about the contribution of my 100-year-old godfather has made to our nation through his war and community service. There have been many other conflicts involving many other members of our communities. All of these service men and women – who wear their medals on the left-hand side of their chests – are owed an eternal debt of gratitude for their bravery and service to Australia. They have seen military and political muscle up close and I’m

sure they are all pleased they don't have to see it like that again. Let's all step outside the values of our culture and grow our faith in JESUS.



May we pray:

Ever-loving and eternal GOD, in the mystery of the Eucharist, you have bestowed upon us the singular gift of your Son, JESUS CHRIST. May our lives be a constant witness to the love we have received and to the eternal joy we have inherited. This we pray through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, risen and glorified forever and ever. Amen

Life Application Study Bible

Saturday Daily Telegraph 25/4/2020

ABC News 23/4/2020