

ONLINE SERVICE

Sunday 26 April 2020

Welcome

Prayer of Invocation

Psalm 82

Henry Haffner and Nathan George
Parish Presbyterian, TN

Bible Reading: Matthew 6:9-15
Christine Bradbeer

Young at Heart

Keith Getty
Careful what you sing about.

Sermon

Fasting in the slowdown
"When you fast"
Matthew 6:16,17

Prayers of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Benediction



NOTICES

26 April 2020

Wednesday 29 April

1.30 pm Covenanted Prayer Time

Sunday 3 May

11 am Sermon on the Mount #



Streaming online during the
COVID-19 lockdown.

To join us online...

Go to blackburnpc.org.au and click the Facebook button or to
<https://www.facebook.com/blackburnpresbyterian/>

For your prayers this week:

Congregational members:

Don and Joan Duncan

also



Mavis PRICE is with WBT. She is a teacher of
Literacy and Anthropology. She is based at Kangaroo
Ground HQ.



MEMBERS who wish to continue their
freewill offerings may use the banking details at the
bottom of this page or post to our Treasurer. Vic
Ansell,

GARDENIA ST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
53 Gardenia Street,
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GARDENIA ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BLACKBURN

26 April 2020



Am I not a Man and a Brother

Medallion modelled by William H. Hackwood,
Wedgwood, Etruria, England, c. 1786, tinted
stoneware - Brooklyn Museum - Brooklyn, New
York, USA.

WELCOME



Armed groups and security forces continued to commit human rights abuses and violations in the context of the Anglophone crisis and the fight against Boko Haram in the Far North. The number of internally displaced people rose and hundreds of thousands of children were prevented from going to school. The authorities repressed dissent.

Amnesty International

Cameroon entered the World Watch List in 2020. Islamic extremism has swept into the country with Boko Haram attacking churches and schools, as well as over 300 Christian homes and shops in the country's north. The Islamic extremist group believes that Islam should be the country's only religion, doing whatever possible to eradicate all others.

Displacement and instability have left churches unable to function normally, with many Christians forced to flee their homes. In some areas, the government has set heavy restrictions on church activities. Corruption has weakened the rule of law in many areas, leaving believers susceptible to persecution.

Open Doors

Fasting in the slowdown.

Sermon Notes

When hand sanitiser and pasta disappeared from supermarket shelves and women were seen fighting over toilet paper in the aisles, you might have been excused for thinking we were living through times of great scarcity.

But the government has explained that we grow enough food to feed a population of 75 million people. We live in an age of plenty. The organisation, Second Bite, 'rescued' 19.4 million kg of food last financial year. Enough for 38 million healthy meals. Australia has several other similar organisations!

Today's reading from the Sermon on the Mount raises a unique question about food. Simply, not eating.

1. What is fasting?

Abstinence from food is called fasting. We know the word from the everyday use of 'breakfast' - the meal that ends the night long 'fast'. World Vision had an annual '40 hour famine'. Participants were asked to 'fast' for 40 hours, or perhaps deny themselves some other 'necessity' (mobile phone, screen time, etc.) and were sponsored to raise money and heighten awareness of, and combat, world hunger.

There is an illness which entails an obsessive abstinence from food. That illness is *anorexia nervosa*. It is a condition which requires the attention of skilled medical practitioners, and the earnest prayers of loving family.

2. Why did people fast?

In the Bible fasting was typically accompanied by looking *back* in sorrow, or by looking *forward* in prayerful hope. In this way both penitence and prayer were connected with fasting.

Israel 'fasted' to commemorate the national 'Day of Atonement' and also the tragic events of their history. Especially the destruction the temple in 586 BC and the Exile.

In Jesus' day some very devout people fasted regularly, even twice a week! (Luke 18:12). But today, apart from a fasting blood test, when might a Christian fast?

3. When should Christians fast?

The question can be answered from Matthew 9 verses 14,15. The answer is when the 'bridegroom is absent'. Superficially this may

This is the kind of fast day I'm after:
to break the chains of injustice,
get rid of exploitation in the workplace,
free the oppressed,
cancel debts.

What I'm interested in seeing you do is:
sharing your food with the hungry,
inviting the homeless poor into your homes,
putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,
being available to your own families.

Do this and the lights will turn on,
and your lives will turn around at once.

Your righteousness will pave your way.

The God of glory will secure your passage.

Then when you pray, God will answer.

You'll call out for help and I'll say, 'Here I am.'

Isaiah 58: 6-9 *The Message*

simply mean when Jesus was 'taken' from the disciples for trial and execution. But was he not 'with them' again at Easter? And absent from his ascension? Present now by his Spirit, and is with us 'always' (Matthew 28)?

And we know from Acts and the Epistles that fasting existed in the early church at critical times such as sending on mission or appointing leaders. It appears that there are times when Christians face such urgent need that they abstain from food to focus on the spiritual challenge.

When Jesus quoted from Psalm 82 (John 10:34) his mission was to renew all things. In Matthew the Beatitudes make this new order clear (also compare Luke 4:18). The true fast the Lord God wants is to bring justice and mercy to earth. See Isaiah 58 (above). This task will not be achieved by half-hearted believers. Consider Wilberforce and the abolition of slavery!

4. How should we fast?

This is exactly what Jesus' brings before us (Matthew 6:16,17). Inconspicuously, calmly and quietly, without fanfare. So God only knows. It is not for the applause or admiration of others, but to displace idols, assert anew what matters most and enjoy renewed intimacy with God.