

ONLINE SERVICE

during COVID-19

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9 August 2020

Welcome and Notices

Amanda Fairs
viola

Call to Worship

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: John 1:1-18
Christine Bradbeer

Great Texts of the Bible#1
The Word became Flesh

Prayers of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Benediction



NOTICES

9 August 2020

Wednesday 12 August

1.30 pm Covenanted Prayer Time

Sunday 16 August

11 am Great Texts of the Bible #2.

For your prayers this week:

Congregational member: Irene LOCKE.

and



Rhys & Rhondda HALL minister in Uganda
and South Sudan with Pioneers..

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, 59 Queen St Kangaroo Flat Vic 3555.

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GARDENIA ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BLACKBURN

9 August 2020



Sagrada Familia, Barcelona
Inside: looking up

WELCOME



The Libyan authorities failed to protect women from gender-based violence at the hands of militias and armed groups. Intimidation, threats and violence against lawyers and judges by armed groups and militias seriously undermined the judicial system. The situation for tens of thousands of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants remained bleak, as they were exposed to arbitrary arrest and abduction by militias and were regularly the victims of human trafficking and abuses by criminal groups.

Amnesty International 2019

Libya has been in turmoil since civil war first broke out in 2011. The lack of law and order has allowed organised crime to thrive, making Christians vulnerable to persecution. Islamic extremists and organised criminal groups kidnap and attack Christians, without facing any consequences. Believers who openly express their faith and try to share it with others risk arrest and extreme violence.

Political uncertainty has allowed the influence of Islamic extremism to grow. Elections were scheduled for 2019, however they have yet to take place. Local language Bibles and other Christian texts are forbidden; Christian missionary activity is officially prohibited. Christians who remain in Libya must hide their faith. The country's deeply Islamic culture means that those who convert to Christianity from Islam face immense pressure from their own families and communities. As Islamic extremist groups and corruption continue to characterise Libya, Christians risk being abducted, harassed and threatened.

Open Doors 2019

Great Texts of the Bible #1 John 1:1-18

Sermon
Notes

There is a saying about John's Gospel; that it is like a pool that's safe for a toddler to paddle in but also deep enough for an elephant to swim in. This catches the amazing appeal of the book's simplicity and profundity. Despite it's imposing its structure and ideas, it makes you welcome. "Millions have found that as they come closer to this book the Friend above all friends is coming out to meet them" (Tom Wright).

1 In the beginning.

From the start John makes clear that what he has to say is connected to a story that began somewhere else. His opening clearly refers back to the first book of the Torah, to the book we call Genesis, the book which has the Hebrew name "In the beginning".

Today it is common to assume that the backstory of the human race is all about chance. Since the middle of the Victorian era Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* has raised questions about human origins.

In 1965 French biochemist Jacques Monod won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. His 1970 book *Chance and Necessity* has been influential in discussions of the origins and purpose of human life. He believes we are the result of evolution, driven by 'pure chance'.

Christians believe that Genesis places a Creator God at the very beginning. [More on Genesis next week]

John wants us to understand that the Creator has graciously revealed himself, and can be known.

2 The Word, with and was God.

Viktor Frankl, in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, argues that human beings cannot live without meaning and purpose.

If everything is the result of pure chance then there is no purpose other than what we imagine, thus 'good' and 'bad' become words whose meaning is totally relative.

The very idea that we inhabit a universe in which there is order, purpose and meaning arises from the biblical text, already ancient when John wrote his Gospel.

To him the *logos* meaning 'word' or 'reason', is both 'with God' and is 'God'.

How did he come to this perspective? Through a person who brought both grace and truth.

3 Became Flesh.

He says the *logos* became 'flesh', 'a human being'. Someone he knew, and wants to communicate to you and me. (See John 20:31)

Again, he draws on Torah terminology. Literally he says 'the word became flesh and *tabernacled* among us'. The term he uses is the term for the Tent of Meeting [or *Tabernacle*] in Exodus. This was the tent where God's presence was symbolised in the middle of the Israelite camp.

It is clear we are being invited by John into the underlying story of the whole Bible. To a pool of ideas not only big enough for an elephant to swim in, but big enough to inspire astronauts such as Jim Irwin and Charlie Duke. It is the greatest story ever told.

4 The Greatest Story.

John wants you and me to believe in and to follow Jesus.

Like every human being, Jesus has a family and a story. If life has meaning and purpose we should expect to see meaning and purpose unfolding in the story of Jesus' family. That is exactly why John is inviting us to connect to the story of the Bible, and to do so from the beginning.

The Bible is a big book and we should not expect to understand it all at once.

During lockdown I have chosen to try and complete a 1000 piece jigsaw puzzle of Melbourne. Right now on the board I have completed Hobson's Bay, a thin blue line marking the route of the Yarra River, and disconnected images of Albert Park Lake and the MCG. Having a copy of the big picture helps me put lots of similar looking pieces together.

In this series of talks we hope to see through key texts the meaning and purpose God has woven into His story, and find our own place within that meaning and purpose.