

ONLINE SERVICE

during COVID-19

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8 November 2020

Welcome and Notices

Amanda Fairs
viola

Call to Worship

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, 9:15
Jakob Bradbeer

Great Texts of the Bible #14
God's unspeakable gift

Prayers of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Benediction



NOTICES

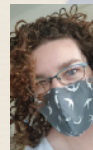
8 November 2020

Wednesday 11 November 1.30 pm Sweet Hour of Prayer
Sunday 15 November 11 am Great Texts of the Bible #15.

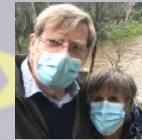
For your prayers this week:

Congregational members:

Christine and Graham BRADBEER



and
Rosie T is with Arab World Media
based in UK.



Members who wish to continue their freewill offerings during the COVID 19 restrictions may post to our Treasurer. Vic Ansell, 59 Queen St Kangaroo Flat, Vic 3555 or use the electronic banking details below.



Electronic Banking Details: ANZ Forest Hill,
Account name: Blackburn Presbyterian Church
BSB: 013-328. Account number: 2970 40694

BLACKBURN
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

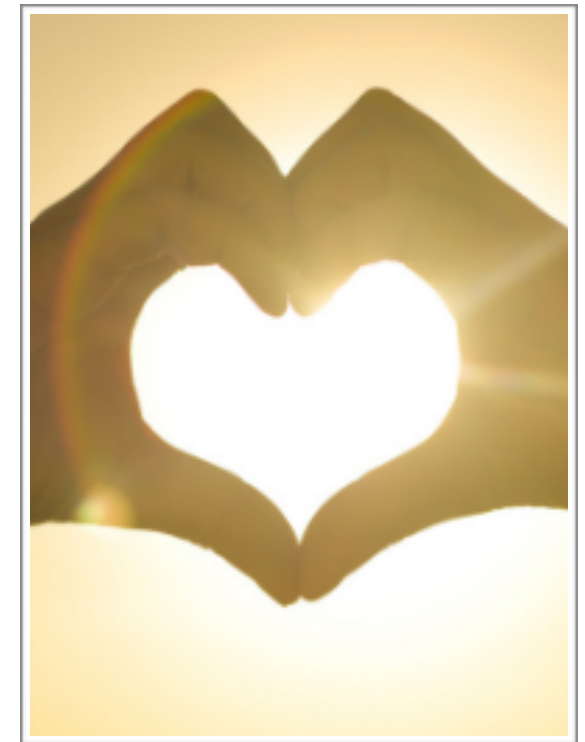
53 Gardenia Street,
Blackburn 3130



Minister: Rev Graham Bradbeer
tel. 9041 7911 mobile. 0409 978 690
Session Clerk: Mr Keith Ferres 98305466
Treasurer: Mr Vic Ansell 5447 7118

GARDENIA ST.
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
BLACKBURN

8 November 2020



You know the grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ...

God's unspeakable gift.

2 Corinthians 8:9, 9:15

WELCOME



The crackdown on real or perceived dissent continued in 2019, despite the end of the two-year-long state of emergency in July 2018. Thousands of people were held in lengthy and punitive pre-trial detention, often without any credible evidence of their having committed any crime recognisable under international law. There were severe restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and people considered critical of the current government – in particular journalists, political activists and human rights defenders – were detained or faced trumped-up criminal charges.

Amnesty International 2019

In Turkish society, strong religious nationalism puts pressure on Christians, making it hard for them to proclaim the gospel. Though converting to Christianity is not illegal in Turkey, it is widely considered unacceptable. Christians often feel pressured to stay silent and hide their faith, especially if they have left Islam.

Leaving Islam is seen as a betrayal of the Turkish identity and a source of shame to the family. Believers who come to Christ are often threatened with divorce and the loss of inheritance rights. Christians who cannot share their faith with their family are often too afraid to meet with fellow believers and become isolated.

Outspoken believers can face discrimination in their workplace and in the legal system. Several churches have also been closed and vandalised. Pastors have been imprisoned or placed under house arrest. Since religious affiliation is recorded on ID cards, it is easy for employers and authorities to discriminate against Christians. They are viewed as second-class citizens and are closely watched by their family and community.

Open Doors, Australia, 2020

Great Texts of the Bible #14 2 Corinthians 8 & 9

Sermon
Notes

In this section of his letter the apostle urges the Corinthians to be generous in their giving to impoverished Jewish Christians.

It is clear that this was a matter of importance to the apostle Paul for he refers to “the collection” in Romans, First and Second Corinthians and Acts. He was determined to give priority to the needs of the “the poor” (Galatians 2:10).

While the first verse I learned from these chapters was 8:9, I want today to dwell on 9:15. These two verses, with the repeated use of the word “grace” take us to the core of Paul’s argument.

I’m using the headings from a sermon by renowned 19th century Baptist minister Alexander Maclaren for our reflection this week. I am deeply conscious of the irony in speaking of the unspeakable.

1 The gift comes from unspeakable love These two chapters are dense with the word ‘grace’. The word variously means favour, kindness, generosity, and is the kind of disposition to be encouraged in believers for several reasons.

As you read these two chapters, and I encourage you to do so with a pencil in your hand, notice and mark the several reasons why such generosity will be beneficial to the church at Corinth, as well as to the recipients

However, the crux of it all comes down to the character of the God we worship. John tells us God is love (1 John 4:8). All who have loved know that it is in the nature of love to give. So it was with God, for John tells us God so loved that He gave.

In John 3:16 it is the quality of the love of God that is the focus, not the quantity. It is easy to love the lovely and loveable. But what about the unlovely? What about the disfigured, the shameful and the sinful? It was from such a love that salvation was to flow.

God so loved that he gave his only begotten Son. Why should we be so loved?

I cannot tell.

2 The gift involves unspeakable sacrifice He was rich. He dwelt in realms of glory unimaginable to us mortals. From eternity it was always thus. We saw this in Philippians 2, that equality with God was his by right.

But the Beloved Son chose not to cling to the prerogatives of deity. There was a lost and wayward world to rescue and redeem. A world that blamed God for all its woes -blamed “the woman you gave me”, and “the snake which beguiled me”.

What on earth could save us?

He embraced poverty, being born as a human being, born into poverty, born to illumine the darkness, born to atone for the wrongs. Born to suffer and give himself. Isaiah and all the prophets saw it through glass darkly.

“Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.” (Lamentations 1:12)

“My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me” cried the Beloved Son. Who can tell what depths he fathomed?

I cannot.

3 The gift brings unspeakable results We may think it ancient history and unrelated to our 21st century lives, but the Bible assures us that in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3).

In our sophisticated 21st century we may imagine we have progressed well beyond the teachings of Jesus. Do we need forgiveness? What enormous guilt and suffering has humanity, for all its modernity, etched upon the historic record?

Do we still hunger for love? Is there not a massive deficit in our families? And among the nations? Surely we yearn for a love that transcends and validates our own loving.

This is only the beginning. The Gospel of Jesus Christ takes us to the edges of joy, gratitude and glory unimaginable. “Eye has not seen or ear heard, neither hath it enter into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those that love Him”

Says Alexander Maclaren, “The only recompense that we can make for the unspeakable gift is to receive it with ‘thanks unto God’ and the yielding up of our hearts unto Him.”

The Unspeakable Gift, given for you, and for me.