

ORDER OF SERVICE

Sunday 18 April 2021

Welcome and Notices
Mr Keith Ferres, Session Clerk

Hymn 562
O God of Bethel

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Acts 1:1-14
Tibor Kosa

Hymn 183
Spirit Divine

Sermon
Acts #1
People get ready
There's a train a-coming

Prayer of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 7
Glory be to God the Father

Benediction



NOTICES

18 April 2021

Website: www.blackburnpc.org.au

Wednesday 21 April 1.30 pm Prayer Meeting.
Sunday 25 April 11 am Divine Service. All Welcome
Covid safe practices.

For your prayers this week:

Congregational member: **Irene Locke.**

and

Mavis Price who is with Wycliffe Bible Translators
at Kangaroo Ground. She oversees students
training with SIL Australia.



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GARDENIA ST.
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
BLACKBURN

18 April 2021



WELCOME

People get ready
There's a train a-coming
You don't need no baggage
You just get on board
All you need is faith
To hear the diesels humming
Don't need no ticket
You just thank the Lord

Curtis Mayfield, 1965

For Your Prayers



The population of Kyrgyzstan is 86% Muslim and there has been a revival of Islamic practices since the country gained independence from communist Soviet rule in 1991.

Kyrgyzstan was the most relaxed towards Christians out of all the Central Asian countries after independence, until the passing of a restrictive Religion Law in 2009. A June 2020 law on the Manipulation of Information, to enable censorship of online media, was passed but in August the president signed objections to it, saying it needed revision.

As at September 2020, there were 259 evangelical churches registered in Kyrgyzstan, with approximately 32 new churches added since April 2019. But many other churches, mostly small (10-20 members), are unregistered and therefore operating illegally. Christians can be punished for sharing their beliefs in public places and religious literature requires state censorship before it is imported or given away. However, most persecution comes not from the authorities but from Muslim clerics, relatives, employers and the community, especially in rural areas.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Christians were very active in helping the needy. When the authorities saw one congregation's zeal in feeding those quarantined in their church building (including the homeless), they gave them a list of isolated elderly people to feed as well. Emigration is affecting the economy and also the Church, as church leaders leave the country in search of work.

Barnabas Fund 2021

People Get Ready There's a train a-coming

Sermon Notes

Jesus! It's only the beginning.

Luke's first two verses are extremely significant. It is no exaggeration to say that they set Christianity apart from other religions that regard their founder as having completed his ministry during his lifetime. Luke says Jesus only began his.

This is the kind of Jesus Christ we believe in: both the historical Jesus who lived and the contemporary Jesus who lives. The book of Acts is about what Jesus continues to do and teach.

Luke emphasises that over a forty day period the apostles were given "many convincing proofs" that Jesus was alive!

Will You? - Jesus' upside-down kingdom

In Jerusalem the disciples are taught about the kingdom of God. They are finding the concept difficult. Their thoughts are of a socio-politico-sphere of influence (v.6) centred on Jerusalem and its Temple. "Will you restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Their vision is still too small, too connected to this worldly power structures. Jesus has something else entirely in mind. The kingdom Jesus has in mind he had demonstrated in the Gospels and taught about in his parables..

It requires an upside down way of thinking, such as we find in the Beattitudes (Matthew 5), the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4), or in the conversations with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman (John 3, 4).

In this kingdom the greatest is the servant of all, the righteous dies for the unrighteous, and the king wears a crown of thorns. Who could have imagined this? And now was Jesus abandoning them?

Ascension: don't just stand there!

The disciples must have felt bereft. The significance of Jesus' ascension was yet to dawn on them!

Tim Keller says any person, given a security clearance, can walk up a few steps and sit on a throne. This is literally ascending. However the action of ascension, by a person duly qualified for the throne, signifies a changed relationship with everyone!

In the case of Jesus' ascension he has earned the right to the throne of the universe. His relationship with everything is changed!

He wrote himself into our human story. By his ascension he takes himself outside that story as an author may direct a play of her own writing.

Jesus will return. He will bring His story to its conclusion.

You will! - but wait for the Gift

Jesus will continue to speak, to heal, to forgive and to nurture through the ages. But how?

He says "You will be my witnesses!" (v.8) The kingdom of God can only be seen through a special lens, and can only be demonstrated with special powers.

This was true for Jesus himself. At the start of his ministry in baptism, Jesus received an endowment of the Holy Spirit.

Now the apostles must wait to be "filled with power". They will become empowered and witnessing disciples. They will receive the Holy Spirit. They will be witnesses to Jesus in "Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, to the ends of the earth".

The 120 disciples could not at this stage have really comprehended the full import of these words, though Luke traces this sequence in the structural framework of Acts. He writes about Jerusalem and Judea (1-7) Samaria (8-12) and beyond, to Rome (13-28).

Taking stock, united in prayer

Of the 120 disciples, the core group were the eleven, with the women, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. They were united in prayer, both in their "upper room" and in the temple (about 1 km away).

They were of one mind and heart in their prayer for what the Lord had promised. That promise was the basis of their prayer. Which of his promises are foundational to our prayers?

The group found in the psalms a warrant for the replacement of Judas. It had to be a man, and someone who had been with the disciples' group from the beginning, someone who had seen the risen Lord. Of the two candidates, Matthias was chosen.

John Stott comments "If the early church was to be accepted as enjoying direct continuity with, indeed being the fulfilment of Old Testament Israel, the number of its founders must not be depleted." So the place left vacant by Judas was filled by Matthias, but the place left vacant by Jesus was not yet filled by the Holy Spirit.