

Howrah Sandford Weekly Church Bulletin

13th September 2020

SUNDAY SERVICES at St Thomas' Howrah 8.30 am & 10 am (Holy Communion, Andrew Lake preaching) and St Barnabas' South Arm 10 am (Holy Communion, Neil Vearing preaching)

There is also weekly online worship found on the home page of www.stthomashowrah.com.

READINGS:

Galatians 3: 1-14

Psalm 32: 1-5

Luke 18: 9-14

SERMON: Part 2 in a series on the Letter to the Galatians: "Justified by faith"

Paul was furious. Some of the Christians were telling new converts that they had to obey all the laws of Moses including circumcision, strict Sabbath-keeping and kosher food rules. He was angry because he knew from personal experience that seeking to please God by keeping all the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament led to one of two spiritual dead-ends. Those with a robust conscience deluded themselves in self-righteousness, while those with a sensitive conscience became enmired in guilt and despair.

Paul explained the profound and surprising truth that we please God by simply trusting him. To make his point he quoted from the Book of Genesis "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." (Galatians 3: 6) In other words God was pleased with Abraham because he simply trusted him. Paul went on to explain that it was to be another four centuries before God gave the Ten Commandments and all the ceremonial laws to Moses, and that law-keeping never replaced trust as the way of pleasing God. (3: 17)

Our church doesn't have a problem with people insisting that new members get circumcised, eat kosher food and not do any work on Saturday. But we can so easily drift away from trusting God in every area of our life. Trust is something young children are better at than adults hence Jesus told his disciples that they needed to be like little children to enter the kingdom of God. We learn trust even before we walk or talk, even before we learn right from wrong or boundaries or consequences, and long before we develop an internal moral compass. The educator Stephen Covey described how trust is supremely important and relevant:

"There is one thing that is common to every individual, relationship, team, family, organisation, nation, economy and civilisation throughout the world – one thing which, if removed, will destroy the most powerful government, the most successful business, the most thriving economy, the most influential leadership, the greatest friendship, the strongest character, the deepest love. On the other hand, if developed and leveraged, that one thing has the potential to create unparalleled success and prosperity in every dimension of life. Yet, it is the least understood, most neglected, and most underestimated possibility of our time. That one thing is trust."

In Genesis 12: 1-3 God called Abraham and said, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Abraham was seventy-five and Sarah sixty-five and they were childless. After twenty five years of trials and tribulations they became the parents of Isaac and the outstanding example of trust/faith/belief/confidence in God.

Abraham and Sarah were the first of God's Chosen People and our spiritual ancestors. They were the original grey nomads. (They did not have a caravan they towed up through Victoria and NSW to Queensland every winter, but they had a tent and moved across the whole Middle East from today's Iraq, through Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, all the way to Egypt. They did not have a super fund but their wealth was measured by a huge flock of sheep and goats and servants to help look after them.)

For them as for us the foundation of their close and loving relationship with God was not slavish obedience to God's laws, not spiritual knowledge, not attracting a band of devotees but simply trust. But,

there's trust and there's trust. For Abraham and Sarah trusting God involved going out on a limb, leaving their comfort zone, suspending their disbelief, hoping against hope that they would have a child. The couple had failures of character, but God did not give up on them. By the end of the story they were bywords for faith in God. They exemplified the key attributes of any child of God: trust in God, faith in God's mercy, belief in God's promises.

Jesus Christ fulfilled God's promise to Abraham and Sarah that through their descendants God would bless the whole human race. Let's be reminded of two of God's promises in John's Gospel: "to all who did receive him (Jesus), to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (1:12) and "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (3: 16)

THINK ABOUT

- Looking back on your life think about a step of faith you took. What were the consequences?
- Abraham and Sarah are a reminder that God is no respecter of age when it comes to calling us to do something entirely new. In what area of your life is God calling you to take a step of faith to do something new?

FOR YOUR PRAYERS:

For Jamie, Claire and family to finish their ministry well at Southern Beaches before they come to join us.

For parishioners who are housebound or in aged care facilities and for those who care for them.

For us all to have a vision for ministry in the communities between St Thomas's Howrah and St Barnabas's South Arm.

For encouragement for Kate serving in South Asia.

For men and women to respond to God's call to offer for ministry in Tasmania and to be prepared to make the sacrifices involved in undertaking training.

FROM THE MINISTER:

I am aware that people of goodwill and good sense have different opinions about the proposed euthanasia bill. I wrote to Joanna Siejka our local MLC about my opposition to the bill and in her reply she told me that "My office has received many emails and letters by members of the community just like you sharing their thoughts and stories on Voluntary Assisted Dying. The overwhelming majority of these support the proposed legislation." I would encourage you to email your opinion to Joanna at

Joanna.Siejka@parliament.tas.gov.au

With the love of Jesus

Andrew Lake

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