

Call to Worship:

The purpose of God is that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to the eternal purpose that He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In Him and through faith in Him we may enter God's presence with boldness and confidence.

From the Father, every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. May he, through the riches of his glory, strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Then you, being rooted and grounded in love, will have power, together with all the church, to comprehend the length and width and height and depth of the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Prayer:

Our heavenly father, who can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to your power that is at work within us, to you be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen

Hymn: *by Charles Wesley*

1. O Thou who camest from above, the pure celestial fire to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love upon the altar of my heart.
2. There let it for Thy glory burn with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return, in humble prayer and fervent praise.
3. Jesus, confirm my heart's desire to work and speak and think for Thee,
still let me guard the holy fire, and still stir up Thy gift in me.
4. Ready for all Thy perfect will, my acts of faith and love repeat,
till death Thy endless mercies seal, and make my sacrifice complete.

Prayer for the persecuted church:

Heavenly Father, today your church on earth, though hated by rebellious people, yet holds faithful testimony. Strengthen it by your grace, that each one pursuing a godly life who is targeted by violent persecutors, shall shine with your glory and feel and know your promised reward. And help us who see these things to fulfil your instruction to remember those in prison as if we were their fellow prisoners and those who are mistreated as if we ourselves are suffering.

Scriptures:

- 2 Timothy 3.1-9
- Philippians 2.12-10.

Some say conditions will get worse as Paul writes to Timothy. But this is not so for true believers. They become better and shine brighter.

Message: The failure of Islam and the victory of Jesus, the Prince of Peace

If ever there was a debate and discussion on conflict resolution, it is now in the aftermath of the Bondi Beach pogrom. Politicians are pleading for all Australians to come together. Social cohesion is their mantra. Others like Josh Frydenberg are more concerned about facing and countering virulent antisemitism stirred by violent jihadist Islam, the Islam which is attested in the Koran and its subsequent interpretations.

The latter, Mr. Frydenberg laments, has been ignored so far. Politicians with large Muslim populations in their electorates shy from exposing jihad, he claims.

So, for the first time, we are hearing political leaders like Andrew Hastie declaring that we are confronted by a theological issue. How is God understood and even revealed? That is what lies behind the assertion of Mr. Hastie.

The Bondi Beach horror coincides with the season when millions are being made aware that a Prince of Peace has arrived and now rules the earth. It is indeed a theological, a Word of God issue, which is what 'theology' actually means. As at first, Christmas coincides with violence and terror. The suffering of innocents by evil men mars God's glorious creation.

On the 25th of November last, I was invited to meet personally for dinner with the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Israeli Embassy. The deputy had come to Adelaide to meet with people who might be useful in helping arrange meetings to inform and combat antisemitism. I heard him say how he, a former Mossad officer, feels intimidated and unsafe in certain public places in Australia. For older Jews and Holocaust survivors, Bondi must have ominous echoes of the Kristallnacht terror in 1930's Germany.

Of all the social and political commentators asking how antisemitism should be countered, former Prime Minister John Howard came closest to the clearest diagnosis of the hate manifest against Jews on December 14. It is a moral matter, he said, it is 'a matter of the heart'.

Our Lord diagnosed the problem of the human heart; *But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these things defile a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slanderⁱ.*

This is the heart disease we all have. Jesus offered the remedy for this incurable condition. The Apostle Peter saw this cleansing happen when he preached Jesus and the New Covenant to Cornelius; *And God, who knows the heart, showed His approval by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as He did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for He cleansed their hearts by faithⁱⁱ.*

Jesus has achieved what no one else in all history has achieved: a remedy for an evil heart. His remedy results in a whole new learning lifestyle, resulting in love and peace. Not a way of life enforced but one which begins to grow from new feelings and desires within.

The two men who killed worshippers last Sunday were following a corrupt religion that produces death. The Koran was received by Muhammad in strange esoteric experiences. It was added to by personal mental experiences called Hadiths. Some see parallels to gnostic

literature of the first centuries, which was rejected from the formation of the New Testament canon.

Islamic texts reject the divine Sonship of Jesus, his sacrificial death and his resurrection, the historic facts which undergird human salvation and indeed the restoration of all things.

But the Apostles who changed the world declared *“that if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with your heart you believe and are justified, and with your mouth you confess and are saved. It is just as the Scripture says: “Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame.”* ^{”iii}

Australia's peace and safety will be advanced as its citizens take confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is the way to God and whose blood alone is both the only moral foundation and power for a cleansed heart as well as the highest example of Godly, God pleasing living.

Mohammedanism, like the false beliefs warned of in the letters of the Apostles, has attracted many followers. Yet, many of those who are sincere seekers of God have been led in dreams and visions to discover and receive the anointed Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus, who by persuasion of heart and conscience, rather than coercion, woos and draws us through truth and understanding.

It is this Jesus who is supreme over all as the Scriptures attest; *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead, so that in all things He may have pre-eminence*^{iv}.

And the amazing truth, which ultimately will bring all to their knees, and opening mouths with one declaration that he is the only Lord, is the One with whom *God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through the blood of His cross*^v.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that you are indeed Lord of all, that you obeyed God by laying down your life for the salvation of the world. I know I need saving so that I should be cleansed of my evil heart, forgiven fully and, with the Lord Jesus, raised to a new life of love and hope through him. I offer my heart and mind to be taught your Way and to live my days on this earth usefully for your kingdom. I want to build up your church, to speak your truth in this violent and darkening age and amongst those closest to me, to give clear testimony to what you have done for me.

In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen

Hymn: *by Isaac Watts*

1. Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does his successive journeys run,
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore, till suns shall rise and set no more.
2. To him shall endless prayer be made, and praises throng to crown his head.
His name like sweet perfume shall rise with every morning sacrifice.
3. People and realms of every tongue dwell on his love with sweetest song,
and infant voices shall proclaim their early blessings on his name.
4. Blessings abound where'er he reigns: the prisoner leaps to lose his chains,
the weary find eternal rest, and all who suffer want are blest.
5. Let every creature rise and bring its grateful honours to our King,
angels descend with songs again, and earth repeat the loud amen.

Benediction:

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever.

Amen^{vi}.

This service was prepared by Rev Ian Clarkson for HopeNet SA

ⁱ Matthew 15.19, more fully in Mark 7.22

ⁱⁱ Acts 15.8-11

ⁱⁱⁱ Romans 10.9-12

^{iv} Colossians 1.15-18

^v 1.19-20

^{vi} Romans 16.25-27, the benediction Apostle Paul applies at the conclusion of his letter to Christians in Rome.