

PRAYER FOR WORSHIP

Lord again we look to your word, and approach you as your people.

We give you praise and honour and thank you that through your Son, our Saviour Jesus, we have the perfect pathway to relate to you. So, Father, this worship time is an offering to you, and we pray that it is worthy of our God. We pray in and through the name of Jesus.

Psalm 119 vs. 105, 108

Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path... Accept my offerings of praise, oh Lord, and teach me thy ordinances.

HYMN: *by Caroline Noel 1817-1877*

1. At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,
Every tongue confess him King of glory now.
'Tis the Father's pleasure, we shall call him Lord,
Who from the beginning was the mighty word.
2. Name him, brothers name him, with love strong as death,
But with awe and wonder and with bated breath;
He is God the Saviour, he is Christ the Lord,
Ever to be worshipped, trusted and adored.
3. Brothers, this Lord Jesus, shall return again with his Father's glory,
With his angel train, for all wreaths of empire, meet upon his brow,
And our hearts confess him, King of Glory now.

Message: When small stands tall

In 2002, we were in the Wakefield Parish ministering to Balaklava, Port Wakefield, Kulpara and Nantawarra congregations. It was a very blest time. That year we also travelled to the UK as our eldest daughter was working in Glasgow hospital and it was her 30th birthday. Whilst in London we visited Westminster Cathedral. I was looking around the huge and impressive Church and remarked to Lin about the place. In a quiet, yet firm voice I heard "maybe, but I prefer Nantawarra (a small prefab building of about 7 or so people). Big is not always best, it seems, nor is it in God's view.

In this message today I am aware that many small congregations are concerned that there will be pressure put on them to close as a congregation. In fact 149 worship places have been earmarked for review. Issues around property compliance, numbers, and finance have been mentioned, and some have been or are about to be visited by church officials to discuss their future.

So, what does the Word say about small? In our Bible reading from Genesis 8 we read "Then God said to Noah go forth from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your son's wives. Bring forth every living thing that is with you all of flesh that they may breed abundantly on the earth".

When Small Stands Tall

God had decided that due to the state of wickedness (Genesis 6 vs 11-14 corrupt and wicked) on the earth that he would start again with the remnant of mankind – the faithful remnant the small strong and faithful led by Noah. At the end of the flood, God frees those in the ark and encourages them to multiply, the faithful remnant.

1. MICAH (Micah 5:2-4)

A prophet, a contemporary of Isaiah calls for justice and peace, and warns Judah about false prophets and corrupt leaders.

Read Micah Chapter 5 vs 2-4. “But you Bethlehem Ephrathah (district) though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times ... he will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach the ends of the earth...and he will be our peace.”

Micah pulls no punches, clearly he calls out the long held roting of the people by the leaders (including priests) and they are brought to account. From ancient times the priests in the temples had been roting finances given by the people to the temple – filling their own pockets. Remember the King Josiah (640 BC) who could not trust the priests to oversee the temple restoration. He gave the money directly to the carpenters, and stone masons, et al, bypassing the temple leaders. That was a measure of how corrupted Jerusalem had become – big, bold Jerusalem, the centre of the political and worship life of Israel. Noisy, crowded, corrupt Jerusalem.

Micah calls out all of this, and prophesies, that the quiet, little known Bethlehem would be the place blessed with the Messiah's arrival. Small stands tall in prophecy.

2. ZACCHAEUS (Luke 19 vs 1-10)

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore fig tree to see him since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately, I must stay at your house today. So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter. He has gone to be the guest of a sinner. But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “look Lord here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount. What an outcome! In the name of Jesus, Zacchaeus stands tall – not physically, but in redemptive terms. Note the crowd gave up on him, and looked down on Jesus. Great news for all of us, the long, short and the tall.

More importantly the forgiven...

3. THE SAMARITAN WOMAN (John Chapter 4 vs 4-28 and 39-42)

The familiar encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan women at the well. One, woman, one encounter, what a result after Jesus spoke with her she went into her village and many came back to see Jesus.

When Small Stands Tall

Verse 42 “we no longer believe because of what you said: now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man is the Saviour of the world” One (Samaritan) woman brought this about.

Clearly it is not about numbers – it’s the witness that we espouse, the faith that we display, the relational evangelism we undertake which counts. It is not magic, its not easy, and its outcome not guaranteed, but small or large, we are called to undertake it.

HYMN: *by John Milton 1608-1674*

1. Let us with a gladsome mind praise the Lord, for he is kind;
For his mercies aye endure, ever faithful, ever sure.
2. Let us blaze his name abroad, for of gods he is the God!
For his mercies aye endure, ever faithful, ever sure.
3. He, with all commanding might, filled the new made world with light,
For his mercies aye endure, ever faithful, ever sure.
4. All things living he doth feed, his full hand supplies their need,
For his mercies aye endure, ever faithful, ever sure.
5. He his chosen race did bless, in the wasteful wilderness,
For his mercies aye endure, ever faithful, ever sure.
6. Let us then with gladsome mind, praise the Lord, for he is kind,
For his mercies aye endure, ever faithful, ever sure.

PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD:

Father, our thoughts turn now to the struggling church. In Iran the many house churches meeting secretly, but fervently as they turn to Jesus. We can only try to envisage just how they survive, how they live and worship in fear, but worship they do. Our open, and peaceful places of worship are often empty Lord. Why we ask? Small in number, but faithful in worship, and called to increase by Jesus. Forgive our lethargy Father, empower us with your spirit, in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Blessing

Bless us Lord, and send us out with your Spirit.

Amen.

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