



**Sunday 14 June to Sunday 21 June**



Sunday 14 June 2020

## Thank God for radishes

by David Folker

**'Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change' (James 1:17).**

Read James 1:1-17

Like many Australian families during the lockdown, we signed up to have a box of fruit and vegetables delivered to our home each week. We are never going back. One of the trade-offs for such convenience is that each week you get a couple of surprises. This week it was radishes. Yes, radishes. I don't think I've ever tried them before. No one in our family had, so I went to a bit of effort to cook them with as much flavour as possible.

Part of our night-time routine is to pray together. On this particular evening after dinner, with all the sincerity in the world, my daughter thanked God for radishes. And the bunnies that eat them.

We have so much that we can learn from children. Jesus himself told us that none could enter the kingdom of heaven unless we become like them (Matthew 18:3). Is this the reason why?

Children are bursting with wonder for the little things. I sometimes think that as we get older, we have a propensity to magnify our concerns instead. Sure, there are a lot of worries at the moment. Possibly more so than any other season in our lives to date. But there are many blessings too. Sometimes they are so small that we fail to notice them. That doesn't mean they aren't there. Start each day with a fresh perspective and go searching for the blessings with eyes like a child.

What are your radishes? Thank God for your radishes today.

***Dearest Father, your blessings are new every morning. Thank you that goodness and mercy will follow me all of my days. Help me to see every drop of your favour on my life. May each fresh revelation point me to your everlasting love. Amen.***

Monday 15 June 2020

## Yes, but what can I do?

by Georgie Schuster

**'He has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners' (Isaiah 61:1b).**

[Read Isaiah 61](#)

We are still negotiating our way through a world st(r)ained with COVID-19 and, suddenly, another hit. Through the pleading words of 'I can't breathe', injustice finds its voice (again) and bottled up emotion spills over. Desperate cries of 'Can you see my/our pain? Please hear me!' seek answers. Anger, frustration and fear mix together and soon destruction, disrespect for property and life follow. Anarchy.

How do we react to this? Do we shake our heads and distance ourselves? Is it just 'too difficult' to even know where to start?

The world Jesus entered was hostile and hard. There was a sense of helplessness as many people lived at the mercy of others. Yet, time and again, Jesus came alongside people and situations that were considered difficult. What did he do? He brought his kingdom with him. He entered into people's stories. He breathed love and hope and brought healing. He made time for people. He listened, recognised and met their needs.

Many lines are relevant in Isaiah 61, but I'll highlight just one: 'He has sent me to comfort those whose hearts have been broken'.

Can't we do that?

We have recently celebrated Pentecost. Now more than ever, equipped with the Holy Spirit, we can play our part. We can enter people's stories by first listening to them and going from there. Imagine what might happen!

***Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the Holy Spirit. Help us to recognise the precious people you place in our path. Help us to listen, to really listen, and be guided by you with words and actions. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.***

Tuesday 16 June 2020

## When did we stop doing that?

by Georgie Schuster

**‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?’ (Matthew 6:25).**

Read Matthew 6:25–34

One lunchtime I was watching children happily playing in the sandpit, burying themselves to their waist, smiling, chatting and having a thoroughly good time. A colleague asked me, ‘When did we stop doing that?’ The children gave no thought as to how much sand was making its way into their socks and shoes and other items of clothing, which they would have to deal with afterwards. There was just the pure delight on the children’s faces as they were enjoying their achievements in the gentle May sunshine.

Living in the moment.

It is so easy to get caught up in the concerns of tomorrow, especially in the present circumstances. Some COVID-19 restrictions are beginning to lift, but how will it impact us in the future? Is it really safe? Will others adhere to the social distancing measures still in place? What will we do when we have to start paying our loans again? It is hard to focus on today with all this hanging over our heads. Where we invest our time and thoughts makes a big difference.

Peter offers some advice: ‘Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you’ (1 Peter 5:7).

Notice he doesn’t say ‘some of your worries’. He has promised to be with us, today, tomorrow and the days after that. So it follows that he will be there to guide, sustain, equip, comfort, provide, love and care for us each day.

With this confidence, maybe we can notice and enjoy the blessings that are given to us in the moment and allow them to refresh our souls ... today.

***Dear Father God, thank you for holding me close to your heart. Thank you for taking my worries and cares. Thank you for the moments you give me each day. Help me to recognise them. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.***

Wednesday 17 June 2020

## Share the load

by David Folker

**'Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls' (Matthew 11:29).**

Read Matthew 11:25-30

At first glance, this verse from Jesus appears to be a direct invitation to join him in some form of menial labour. Surely, that's not an effective way to win followers. I'm almost certain that most social reformists wouldn't expect too many people to get on board if they went about saying, 'Here's my new way of doing things! Be prepared to be burdened!' It's easy for us to misunderstand by reading this verse from the lens of our own culture. But people in Jesus' time knew what he was talking about.

In those days, much of the farming fell upon the sturdy shoulders of the oxen. Oxen usually worked in teams; an older beast and the younger. The younger was yoked to the stronger animal to teach it the ropes. The older oxen bore the burden. The younger followed.

Jesus wants to share your load. He wants to take it on board. He wants to ease your burden, whatever it might be in the current climate. Nothing is too great. He can handle it.

After all, the same strong shoulders bore the weight of the cross. For you.

***Jesus, thank you that you are willing to take on my burdens. I'm ready to hand them over to you. Amen.***

Thursday 18 June 2020

## What great love!

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**'See what great love the Father has lavished on us' (1 John 3:1).**

Read 1 John 3:1-2

Do you realise that as a Christian, you are a daughter of the creator of the universe; a son of the God of Israel; a sister/brother of Jesus? That's right, our Lord and our Saviour – who lived, died, rose and ascended is now our big brother. What great love the Father has shown to us! John (as does Paul) wants us to know that our Father has adopted us. And notice that John also wants us to know that we have this *now*! It is not that when we die, or when Christ returns, but right now – you are a child of God!

But the blessings continue. While you are a child of God now, when Christ returns, you will then be like him. Think of those wonderful accounts of our resurrected Lord as a tiny glimpse of what is to come. When Christ returns, we will also receive our glorified bodies – we will be like him. But wait, there's more! We will also see Jesus as he is. Our eyes will truly be opened, and we will be able to see his glory.

Like you, I am getting older. I have to think before getting out of a chair. Sometimes when I drop something, I wonder whether I really need it anymore. What comfort to know that because of my Lord Jesus, I will one day be like him. A glorified body awaits – one that will not fail me; one that will not be subject to decay and death. But not just me, you also! All because of what Jesus has done for us.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us!

***Gracious Father, thank you! Thank you for showing such love to me. Help me to follow and obey your dear Son, not in my strength but through your Holy Spirit. Help me to remember how much you love me. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.***

Friday 19 June 2020

## By the stream

by Maria Rudolph

**'But whose delight is in the law of the Lord ... [are] like a tree planted by streams of water' (Psalm 1:2-3).**

Read Psalm 1

The Book of Psalms is also called the Prayer Book of the Bible. In it many human heart conditions are addressed and prayerfully brought before the Lord, sometimes as an outcry and a lament. In Psalm 1, a beautiful picture is painted of a lush tree growing by a stream, roots deeply anchored near a riverbed.

The roots of some trees are nearly as deeply anchored in the ground as the tree is high above the earth. As a faithful child of God, if you have your roots deeply anchored in the word of God and if you keep a close relationship with him by involving him in your daily life and decisions, you are like that healthy tree. God is the one who gives us the ability to have a loving relationship with: 'Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads'.

We walk more in step with our Lord when we know his words well by immersing ourselves in them as often as we can and is practical for us. This time of social distancing provides us with some good opportunities to open our Bible more often, with some outside distractions eliminated. And how wonderful – you are doing that right now as you ponder the words of this devotion!

***Dear Lord, I thank you for making me a part of your flock. Feed me with your word every day so that I can be deeply rooted in you. You have the words of eternal life. Make me hungry and thirsty for them; make me want to soak them up like a strong tree planted by the stream. I want to know you more and more. In Jesus' name, Amen.***

Saturday 20 June 2020

## Order up!

by Darren Pope

**'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep' (John 21:16).**

Read John 21:15–18

Cravings for single-origin roast and bespoke baked items crafted daily onsite are satiated amidst a proliferation of minimalist cafés, carved out of loading docks and hidden cubbyholes tucked away in cosy laneways across our cities. Menus scratched on blackboard walls and the constant call of 'Order up!' translates into chefs scurrying about in cramped backrooms to create distinctive and stimulating sensory dishes.

Unspoken, yet central to the culture of niche eateries, is not just the culinary experience but also a strong sense of identity through shared community and connection. These qualities are also foundational in our church communities through our focus on noticing needs, reaching out in compassion and caring for each other.

In dialogue with Peter (John 21), Jesus asks, 'Do you love me?' Peter's response is a heartfelt 'Yes!' Jesus continues, 'Feed my lambs. Take care of my sheep. Feed my sheep. Follow me!' This conversation with Peter highlights the importance of being nourished and actively engaging in 'doing life' together. This invitation from Christ, active as a verb, is shared with all people who are called to serve. Each day, Lutheran communities respond to this invitation. Our shared ministry and mission is a response to what God has already done for us through Christ.

Amid the busyness of re-opening businesses and church buildings, global uncertainty, financial upheaval and challenging conversations, the daily menu can seem overcrowded. Jesus has a way of cutting through all of this, recognising our humanity and coming to us, inviting an individual response through action.

This invitation doesn't cause us to scurry about like a café chef, though. Instead, it clarifies for us that identity and connection are fostered and nurtured through community.

Our daily focus is clear. 'Feed my sheep.'

Order up!

***Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. Help me to care for the people you have called me to serve today. Amen.***



Sunday 21 June

## Who sees?

by Sal Huckel

**'Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters' (Colossians 3:23).**

Read Colossians 3:18-25

In everyday life we benefit from so much work that goes on behind the scenes or is hidden in plain sight. We sit down to a clean table in a food hall. We can be sure that our supermarket's shelves are being restocked while we sleep. Sometimes we are able to thank and bless the people who do these things for us, but most of the time their jobs are thankless and their work is hidden.

During these times of isolation and disruption, perhaps the tables have been turned. The cleaners and the shelf-stockers staff are in full view – and valued differently. At the same time, some people who are normally at the forefront have been forced to work from home – still doing their job but having no idea whatsoever whether their work is being received favourably or even if anyone is watching or listening. Some of us might be teachers preparing lessons for absent students, or members of children's ministry teams sending out lessons, or pastors providing services online and, for some, in the printed word.

For some of us, even in 'normal times' the phone call might not be returned. The letter and gift go unacknowledged. The hoped-for job application is neither accepted nor rejected.

Be encouraged. We have an audience of One, a God who sees all. Sometimes we may feel that no-one is noticing, appreciating or listening. Other times the Lord gives us an insight into the effects our efforts are having. We pursue our daily work and follow his leading with a heart of generosity and blessing anyway. We are working for the Lord.

We can also ask him to open our eyes to acknowledging the work of others, which we might otherwise overlook.

***Lord, help us to give our whole effort to work that is seen, and unseen. Help us to be aware that it is you we are serving, as we do our work, as we read the email, clean the table, organise our task list. Open our eyes to the work we sometimes miss, and inspire us to encourage and thank others for their efforts. We pray you will show us with grace where we fall short. In Jesus' name, Amen.***