



Alstonville Anglicans

Pentecost 21

Sunday 30th October 2022

Welcome



Sharing the Good Life

We acknowledge the Bundjalung people, traditional custodians of the Land.

Our doors are open: LGBTQIA+ welcome here.

Streaming licence: CCLI 102220

Alstonville Anglicans are committed to ensuring that all people who participate in our worship, programs and ministries have a safe and rewarding experience.

Tel: 66280231 www.anglicans.live

Bank account: BSB 705 077 / Acc:00032931

Dates 30th October to 6th November

30 th Oct	Sunday
9am	Holy Communion
31 st Oct	Monday
9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
9am-3pm	Op Shop
1 st Nov	Tuesday
	Parish Office Closed (No office access)
4pm	Singalong group (contact Susan)
2 nd Nov	Wednesday
9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
9am	Anam Cara (contact Charlie)
9am-3pm	Op Shop
3 rd Nov	Thursday
9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
9am-3pm	Op Shop
6pm	Anam Cara (contact Charlie)
4 th Nov	Friday
9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
10am	Holy Communion
6 th Nov	Sunday
9am	Holy Communion

This bulletin contains current announcements and the week's calendar and the sermon notes from the previous Sunday. Use our welcome booklet for info and contact details for regular activities. Keep it as a reference tool. We welcome any feedback on the booklet.

https://anglicans.live/s/welcomeBooklet_v2.pdf

Community Engagemnet

Ballina Region for Refugees Fundraiser

Run for Refugees

Sunday 20th November

The event is a 5 kilometre walk or run out and back from Ballina North Wall to Black Head car park past Shelly Beach.

To join team BR4R go to

<https://kmssofcompassion.gofundraise.com.au/>

This event gives great public attention to issues facing refugees.

To make you smile!



Quota Alstonville's Creative Christmas Tree event

Sat / Sun 26th & 27th November

10am – 3pm

Alstonville Community Centre

All proceeds to local charities.

Our Messy Church families have created a wonderful entry.

Worship & Spirituality



Sound Sauna & Healing Experience 6pm

Community Meal 7pm

Thursday 10th November

All welcome. Cost by donation. BYO
wine/ drinks, meal provided
(vegetarian, gluten and dairy free)



Alstonville
Anglicans
6 The Avenue
Alstonville
anglicans.live



Coming next week, an invitation to choose a Life Group for five weeks commencing in the week following Sunday 13th November. There will be the option to join one of the seven groups which will be spread at different times from Monday to Thursday.

Also, there will be the option to choose a group that is discussing either the book "Learning to Walk in the Dark" by Barbara Brown Taylor or "The Christmas Story" by Borg and Crossan. More details next week, but enquiries can be made now to Greg: 0412660742.

Messy Church



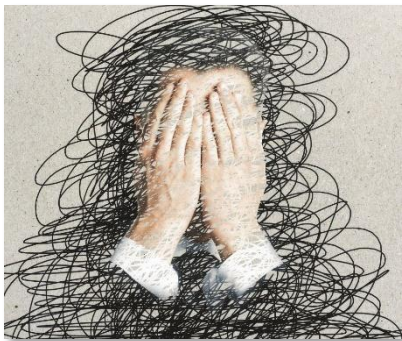
Thank you to everyone who contributed to making Messy Church such fun and such a success. Pictured here is the 'Faces of Christmas' Tree. Please drop into the hall and have a look. It is beautiful!

Sermon Notes

Preached on 23rd October

Luke 18.9-14

Tax Collectors and Pharisees



Why are we so busy? Why are we working so hard? Are we working so hard because we want to be "successful"? What is a successful life? Some say we work so hard to get ahead, or get on top, but get ahead of what? What are we trying to get on top of? At 2am when you are suddenly more awake than you will ever be for the rest of the day,

what questions churn across your mind? What fears and anxieties tumble and turn across your dark imagination? Many listening are retired yet are busier now than they ever were when they had careers. Why the busyness? What is it we are hiding from?

Questions regarding our busyness, our hard work, our over stimulated minds are essential for our humanity, let alone our

Christian discipleship. Jesus is riding the escalator down while we are riding the escalator up. As Brian McLaren puts it, "The Kingdom of God is about God's Kingdom being done on Earth. It's not a plan of upward mobility and how we get to Heaven but about how God's Kingdom comes down to Earth ... it's a downward movement."

There are many examples of success, people who are riding the escalator up. Warren Buffet and his success with money is an example of success, as is Bill Gates and Jeff Bizo. Two weeks ago Liz Truss may have been an example of political success. In the age of social media Instagram celebrities are an example of success.

Essena O'Neil, a young adult, born 1996, is from Coolumberrong on the Sunshine Coast. In 2015 she was a successful model and social media star with more than 600, 000 followers on YouTube and peaking at around 1 million followers on Instagram before she deleted all social media accounts. "I've spent the majority of my teenage life being addicted to social media, social approval, social status, and my physical appearance, " O'Neill writes in her last Instagram post on October 27, "[Social media] is contrived images and edited clips ranked against each other. It's a system based on social approval, likes, validation, in views, success in followers. It's perfectly orchestrated self-absorbed judgement." <https://www.elle.com/culture/news/a31635/essena-oneill-instagram-social-media-is-not-real-life/>. Essena left social media because it was toxic for her. Thousands of followers wanted to be just like her. Success, when it is based on how many likes and followers you have, and how, after 100 selfies you have achieved the perfect picture, is not enough.

Essena, Bill Gates, Jeff Bizo and Warren Buffet all have had success. Now imagine that they have received enlightenment, they have read the Gospel, had an encounter with the risen Christ, and now base their lives totally on God. They live their lives totally for the kingdom of God. They sell all their wealth,

give it to the poor and begin a life dedicated to prayer, mediation and serving the poorest of the poor. Would a life of total self-sacrifice be following the path of Christ downwards? Would that be real success? Would that be true humanity, living authentic discipleship? Let us turn to the parable and wrestle some more.

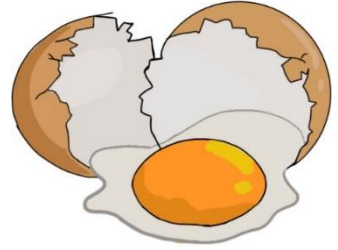
Jesus says, "Two men went up to the temple to pray. One of them was a Pharisee. The other was a tax collector." The tax collector is the most hated person in all Jerusalem. He is like the Mafia. He is a sell out and a Crook. He is very wealthy and not a cent he owns is earned honestly. The Roman Government tells him what he must accumulate by way of tax. The rest of the "tax" he collects is his fee and he determines the price. He is so hated that he probably rarely leaves home without a bodyguard.

The Pharisee on the other hand is the most loved person in all Jerusalem. He is a success. The pharisee is an amazing father, a brilliant husband, a religious man loved and respected by the poor and community. The Pharisee stands by himself, and he prays, and he says, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people. I am not a thief. I am not a rogue. I am not an adulterer. I am certainly not like this tax collector over here. I fast twice a week. I give away a tenth of my income." That is his speech.

Then the tax collector says (he won't look up to the heaven; he looks at his shoe tips), "God be merciful to me a sinner." Then Jesus says, "I tell you this man (the tax collector) went to his house justified rather than the other.

Jesus says, "Two men went up to the temple to pray. One of them was a Pharisee. The other was a tax collector": Jesus has set you up. The examples of the pharisee and the tax collector are hyperbolic, comedy satire and extreme caricatures. Parables such as the tax collector and pharisee are like fried eggs. Over

easy parables, like over easy eggs, leave you with egg on your face. The parable could simply be an example of the virtue of humility. But is humility the point of the parable?



The mention of the pharisee is the first warning that we are walking into an interpretation trap. Although in a Biblical context a pharisee may be a loved and respected person, we have been conditioned to be suspicious of the pharisees. We have been taught to be wary of their hypocrisy, their religiosity, the way they place the needs of the Bible over the needs of people, their tendency to oversimplify the world into good and bad, right and wrong, black and white, with little possibility for grey. Thus as we hear or read the parable of the pharisee and the tax collector we may subconsciously be praying: "dear God thank you that I am not like this pharisee, thank you that I am not so self-righteous, thank you that I do not boast about my piety like he does, thank you that I am humble like this tax collector...thank you that I am a sheep, and you are my shepherd." Luke 18.9-14 is an incredibly difficult parable to preach, least of all because it so well worn and familiar. The second we divide any aspect of creation into any kind of groups: goodies and baddies, insiders and outsiders, progressives and conservatives, helpful plants and insects vs less helpful plants and annoying flies, midges and mosquitos, native species vs alien invaders and noxious weeds, native marsupials vs feral dogs, rabbits, rats and pigs ... we are standing boots and all in the camp of the pharisees (see I have already made my own mistake...sigh). Every time we hear a story of suffering and think "there but for the grace of God go I" we are standing alongside the pharisee. We hear and see stories of destruction and recovery from the flood survivors, and we think "there but for the grace of God go I" ... we have somehow stepped into the shoes of the pharisees because we have divided the world into those who need help and those who don't.

By the way – the point of the parable is not about humility. Nor is Jesus reprimanding the Pharisee for showing off. At no point does Jesus disagree with the pharisee. The pharisee is 100 percent correct. He is righteous. Righteous means successful. The pharisee is a successful man. He has understood the law and lived it. The pharisee is living a good life, an authentic life, he is exercising his gratitude for all the goodness he enjoys. The problem is, as Jesus sees it, is that the Pharisee thinks his good deeds, his success at living, can give him meaning, can give him purpose, and can heal the world. The problem is not the pharisee or the tax collector, but religion.

The essential message is this: Jesus comes to end religion. And as long as we remain religious we will never inherit the kingdom of God, which is always at hand, always present, always within, always abundantly available, all the time, in all places to all people. The kingdom of God is like air, it is always there, always, and everywhere available but difficult to contain, to catch and to possess.

Humankind is desperately religious. What is religion? Religion means that we believe that there is something we can do from our side that can fix our relationship with Jesus or fill the emptiness we feel or force meaning into our lives. God is not going to risk mending the entire universe on the merits of good behaviour, on successful programs and successful people. Religion is the best thing in the world and the worst thing. That which makes you holy also makes you evil. For example Paul writes in his letter to the Romans how Israel is looking for a righteousness derived from the law. It failed. Why? Because they relied on being good rather than trust. Success, law, or religion has no power to transform the world. Law, religion, success in



whatever form is not going to change the world. Lastness, leastness, lostness, littleness: being a loser, being dead to self, are what open us to the possibility of peace, transformation, and well-being. For this reason, Jesus is not upset with sinners, religion is upset with sinners. Jesus is only upset with those that think they are not sinners – mostly the religious. Doing it wrong and mercy is what takes us to God.

The story is a parable about the futility of religion, the futility of success as we define it: that there isn't anything at all that we can do to put ourselves right with God, there is little we can do to heal the emptiness or anxiety or fear or a lack of meaning and purpose.

Why is the tax collector justified? What is it about him that opens him to justification? I think it has something to do with emptiness, something to do with reaching the end of your own resources, knowing that you have tried everything and knowing you need help. The biblical word for this is death. The only way that we can be reconciled to God, the only way we can live a full and meaningful life, is through death. How will we be saved by being dead? Being dead – dead to self, dead to religion, dead to thinking that our good deeds will help, dead to any ideas of success, finally makes us empty enough to be filled with the presence of God.

That is the message of the parable – when we are empty enough for God, God's Grace transforms. God's grace rushes in and changes us from the inside out. God's grace changes the world. Grace is God's acceptance of us. What does a prayer of an empty one look like? Perhaps we can pray with Merton:

My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will



does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you

does in fact please you.

And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust you always though

I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.

I will not fear, for you are ever with me,

and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

"The Merton Prayer" from [Thoughts in Solitude](#) Copyright © 1956, 1958 by The Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani. Used by permission of Farrar Straus Giroux.

Sentence of the Day

Today salvation has come to this house, for the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost. Luke 19.10

Collect

Merciful God,
righteous Judge of all,
who sent Jesus among us to seek and to save those who are lost:

grant that we may eagerly seek the Saviour,
and joyfully welcome him into our homes and lives.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Luke 6.20-31

20 Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

‘Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 ‘Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

‘Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

22 ‘Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you^[a] on account of the Son of Man. **23** Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

24 ‘But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

25 ‘Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.

‘Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

26 ‘Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

27 ‘But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28** bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. **29** If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. **30** Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. **31** Do to others as you would have them do to you.