

WELCOME 24th November 2019 – Christ the King '19 C

Psalm 139:1-18; John 10:14-15 & 27-29; Romans 8:1-4; Joel 2:25-27 and Philippians 1:3-6

BG – Hey mum...have you got a minute?

BA – Always for you. What's up?

BG - You know Elena from my soccer team?

BA – The really tall one?

BG – Yeah her

BA – What about her?

BG – Well you know her dad's a big high-power corporate lawyer & her mum's curriculum expert with the Education Department? Both real big important influential people?

BA – I know that yes...What's that got to do with anything?

BG – Well Elena says she never feels like she measures up to that standard...like she is always a failure & almost never hears a "good job" from either of them.

BA – That's got to be hard.

BG – Yeah...Just making the team isn't good enough...it's "you have to score." Good grades aren't enough it's "you have to top the class." And I think it's starting to wear her down...a lot. She seems pretty depressed.

BA – Tell me what "depressed" looks like to a 15 year old?

BG – Not eating...maybe 'cutting'...

BA – Whoa! Did you say 'cutting' as in hurting herself?

BG – Yeah...& maybe other "stuff" you know?

BA – I can imagine...What's your question?

BG – How do I help? What can I do to maybe make things better?

BA – First...I don't think it's on you to make her better or her situation better. But there's lots you can do...You know what I'm going to say don't you?

BG – Sure...tell her about Jesus...Muum!

BA – Well...eventually...but maybe first have a word with Mrs. Banks the school counsellor...you sit behind her in worship every Sunday...I think she might be a big help here...

BG – Yeah! I really like her.

BA - But after you do that see if you can help Elena understand she has value & worth & significance beyond her achievements or her failures? Help her understand she is loved & treasured even if she doesn't make the team or score the lead role in the school production.

BG – And how do I do that?

What **HAS GOD** said about our value before him? Our worth from all eternity? How we matter infinitely eternally to him?

What **HAS GOD** said about the colossal blunders & magnificent messes we make of our lives, & what **HE** plans to do about them? What **HAS GOD** said that provides hope & healing to face the future we all await at the end of our lives?

What **HAS GOD** said that we can trust with all our hearts & share with all our might? We'll explore and experience that together today...

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, in all things & in every season of life we know you never relax your embrace of our lives...Today again speak your promises into our hearts & draw us near to you. Let your life be made real in us in full abundance and give your Spirit free rein over our lives. We pray through Jesus Christ. Amem.

CHRIST THE KING '19 C – WHAT GOD HAS SAID

FAITH CHAT: Heb 2:14-15, 4:14-16, 13:5b-6...Gal 2:20, Eph 1:19-20, 3:20, Col 1:19-20, 1:27

1. What is your “go to” Bible verse? or verses? Not just favourite, but one/some that really speak to your heart/life... > Jn 3:16 or Ps 23. Why that? Can you share it w/ someone opening conversation about Jesus?
2. Is there one thing God has said about you that you hang on to at all times? Why that?

Last year my sister gave my mom one of those ancestry/dna discovery kits...No idea why but it was funny because my mom takes medication that makes her incapable of spitting...she can't get a saliva sample large enough to put in the test tube to get sampled...“Oh...who knew that?”. But it was kinda funny watching her try. She had about as much fun as we did...I kept waiting for her to spit in my sister's eye.

But talking later...my mother said she really hoped some biographical background info could be found. Our family is one of those where there aren't a ton of historical records just sitting gathering dust in courthouses or big family bibles. We've done some of that digging & found courthouse fires & immigration histories that stop at the Port of Galveston & nothing more...from there it's all legend & speculation.

Which is frustrating because we all want some sense of who we are in the great trajectory of human life/history. It's become chic to have a convict in your Aussie family tree, or to trace back to the 1st fleet...or the 1st German fleet. We've got a friend in the US who to their surprise discovered half-siblings they knew nothing about...I did a wedding years ago where the groom joked about how he had to travel a long way from home to find a bride because his great-grandfather was a bit of a naughty boy as a young man & it was rumoured he had close kin all over a 150K radius & he didn't want to marry too closely into the family tree...Adopted kids often struggle w/ “I know I belong here, but I wonder about my place over there.

We all long for some sense of who we are...where we fit...what we are here for. Our made up friend “Elena” this morning or the scenarios from previous weeks...when our lives are one disaster after another, when everything falls apart, when our hearts incline toward our own desires apart from any thought of God...What has God said about who we are & our place in the universe...the very essence of “why” we exist... What **HAS GOD** said about our value before him? Our worth infinitely eternally to him? What **HAS GOD** said about the colossal blunders & magnificent messes we make of our lives, & what **HE** plans to do about them? What **HAS GOD** said that provides healing & hope to face the future we know waits at the end of our lives? What **HAS GOD** said that we can trust with all our hearts & share with all our might?

THAT IS THE QUESTION

We heard some of it already this morning: “*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body & knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvellous — how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born...*” God says your life is intentional. Intention.

You're not an accident, not a mistake, not some calamity that couldn't be avoided. You're here on this earth on purpose. You've been crafted in the image of the Almighty Father so that through **YOU** his love & life & glory might be displayed...to be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ. You can't aspire to a higher calling. You can't climb yourself up to a loftier pedestal than the one for which you were “*woven together*.” You can't seek a job description more glorious than that you bear the Father's image, live his presence & carry out his work here on this earth...the very thing you were made to do under the Father's watchful eye/marvellous crafting.

Not only are you **NOT** a mistake God's verdict from the beginning on **ALL** he made is “*very good*.” Then God looked over all he had made, & he saw that it was very good! 1:31 *Very good* means you are just who God had in mind...you are precisely what God was thinking when he wanted to display his goodness & glory. I don't know what you see in the mirror, what you say about you in the quiet places in your heart, how you describe yourself to others or picture the working out of your life...but the Father says “*very good*” & he's the one who counts the hairs on your head...he's the one who makes himself at home in the intimate spaces of our lives *O Lord, you have examined my heart & know everything about me...You go before me & follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head.* He's the one who makes himself at home in the intimate spaces of our lives not to frighten, bully or bludgeon into rigid conformity but to bless to care to love...God says I made you for me/my blessing.

But we've all been around long enough to know there's that gap...You know the gap, the gap between that ideal that intention & the way we don't live it. We don't live up to our own standards much less God's. We have a picture of our world where everything & everyone is working in harmony & we don't even try to get to know our neighbours. We walk past the homeless & wish other nations would take care of their own business & leave us out. Families around us stand in ruin & half of the community looks on the other half like we've smelled something bad. “*Do justice, love mercy, walk*

humbly before God” Mic 6:8 Is that the way our world looks to you? Nah...me either. That’s the gap...All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. – Is 53:6 cats...narcissistic individuality

But the Father is not content to let that gap go untouched...uncrossed...unhealed. So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus...God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. In that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sin You are not only crafted with Intention you are chosen for Redemption. In Christ God did what the law could not do – did what religion cannot do – did what praying to Mecca 5x/day cannot do – did what the downward dog cannot do – did what secular pseudo-scientific atheism cannot do – did what going carbon neutral cannot do...In Christ alone God takes the broken bits of the universe & of our lives & weaves them together again according to his original design...he closes the gap between the life of God & the wayward wandering lives of us...“I—yes, I alone—will blot out your sins for my own sake & will remember them no more.” – Is 43:25

That’s not a business deal...quid pro quo...I do this you do that transaction. With the Father it is always personal. The Son comes in our flesh sharing our burdens suffering our wounds bearing our sorrows. He bleeds as we do dies as we do then lives so we can...“I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, & they know me, just as my Father knows me & I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep...My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, & they follow me. I give them eternal life, & they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, & he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father’s hand.” Once & for all, irrevocably & forever “He has removed our sin as far from us as the east is from the west. The Lord is like a father to his children; tender & compassionate to those who fear him...” – Ps 103:12-13 crafted with Intention chosen for Redemption

Too often we hear that & get all excited & then promptly lock that away in the “for the future” file. We stack it in the “when I am about to die” stack & go back to the daily drudgery grind it out style of living too many of us settle for. Please don’t do that. You are crafted with Intention, chosen for Redemption, & gifted for Restoration. The resurrection of Jesus from the grave is not only a promise for tomorrow it is power for today. “Or have you forgotten, when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? We died & were buried with Christ by baptism. Now just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.” – Rom 6:3-7 What sin death & the devil have stolen from us, the risen Jesus Christ gives back.

Pr Tim Keller says it like this: The resurrection is not just consolation – it is restoration. We get it all back – the love, the loved ones, the goods, the beauties of this life – but in new, unimaginable degrees of glory & joy & strength. Whatever we have lost, because of Christ, we get back. **AND** Whatever continues to steal kill or destroy is overthrown. “I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power in/for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead.”- Eph 1:19-20 The same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in you You can forgive with the power of Christ. You can pray for healing with the power of Christ. You can offer reconciliation with the Father with the power of Christ. What is going to attack you that is stronger than the power that raised Christ from the dead? What are you going to face that is bigger than the empty tomb & the risen reigning Jesus Christ living in you? What sin is going to test you that the resurrection has not already forgiven & given you strength to withstand? *You have died with Christ, & he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. – Col 2:20*

You are crafted with Intention, chosen for Redemption, gifted for Restoration & assured of God’s Direction. *Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.* You’ve heard me say before that the NT was written because our early Christian ancestors understood that the work of Christ was not yet finished on this earth & we would need their witness to carry out our witness until that work was finished & Christ returned.

And until that’s done...*If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. – Jas 1:5 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, & we will find grace to help us when we need it most. – Heb 4:16 He will take our weak mortal bodies & change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control. – Phil 3:21* You’ve been crafted in the image of the Almighty Father so that through **you** his love & life & glory might be displayed...to be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ. You can’t aspire to a higher calling. And the Father never tires or walks away from his saving shaping work on us...

What **has God** said that we can trust with all our hearts & share with all our might? You are crafted with Intention, chosen for Redemption, gifted for Restoration & assured of God's Direction.

Let's pray with that in mind...Father in all things you are with us and at all times you are moving us toward your glorious triumph at the end of all things here on earth. You have created us to be with you always, to reveal you to those around us and to delight in the abundance of your blessings. Let your Word find its home in our hearts and produce a harvest of righteousness and a bounty of lives blessed for all eternity. Be our strength and our hope so we can offer your loving embrace to others...Jesus in your Name we pray...Amen.