

A Service for the week to the 13th of Dec

This service is written for Stretton Park and McDonald Wing in Maffra, Laurina Lodge in Heyfield and Royal Freemason's in Sale, with the intention of also being available for wider and private use.

INTRODUCTION

St Paul writes in First Thessalonians chapter 5: Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire. Hold onto the good and avoid evil.

HYMN No. 3 - Fill though my life O Lord my God

You can read the words to yourself, or out loud. If you remember the tune well enough you can sing it yourself. You can, of course sing just the first, or the first and last verses.

PRAYER

Thank you, Lord God that you care for us. In your might and power you could be indifferent to us, your creation, just as we are sometimes forgetful and careless of things that we have made. Help us to remember you O Lord, day to day, as you remember us. Forgive us, we ask, for those times when we have forgotten you. We feel more together, more whole, more balanced when we have you in our lives. Help us Lord to experience those things. Come to us, where we are, with our failings and our weaknesses and help us to become people who benefit from the closeness of your love and care.
Amen

READING - PSALM 126

HYMN No. 25 - I come to the garden alone

BIBLE READINGS - Isaiah 61 : 1 - 4 and John 1 : 6 - 8 & 19 - 28

REFLECTION

John the Baptist was a 'bushie'. He lived out in the wilderness, living on what he found there in the bush. He had probably lived with a Jewish faith commune, and may have still been with them on an occasional basis. A group called the Essenes had a settlement that was somewhat like a monastery in the area. John had probably left the group he was with when he began his ministry. When John went up to the Jordan River district to baptise people he may have received gifts of food or hospitality from people who offered it.

John was a cause of concern to the Jewish leaders of the time. He called people to repentance and baptism. His message was about living a life that was good, responsible and holy. John was concerned about people's day to day behaviour. The Jewish leaders were concerned about how often people came to the temple and what they did when they were there. John was concerned with what happened outside the temple, the Jewish leaders were concerned with what happened inside the temple. The Jewish leaders came to ask John questions and find out more about him. Did he claim to be the Messiah they had been waiting for or was he a good Jew who just needed to be bought into line?

Or maybe he was he a crack-pot they should condemn. John replied to them - no I am not the Messiah, I am the prophet who points the way to the Messiah. I prepare the way for the Messiah in the same way that Isiah wrote about, when he spoke about making a straight path through the wilderness for the people of God to travel on. John said that he was the person who prepared, the one who made things ready for the coming Messiah.

We remember John the Baptist today as we prepare to celebrate the coming of the Messiah, the birth of Jesus, at Christmas time. Christmas is only a couple of weeks away now. When it arrives we will celebrate Jesus, the man who changed the world. Jesus and his message changed history, influenced governments and changed welfare work across the world. And that was just the side effects of Jesus coming as the saviour of the world who drew people to God. That really puts Christmas into perspective.

HYMN No. 27 - I am so glad that Jesus love me

PRAYER

God our Father, thank you that you love us no matter what. Even though you are the maker and ruler of the universe, you care for us and you are concerned about our welfare. We bring to you today the things that concern us, knowing that they will concern you too. As our hearts go out across the world, we would ask your help for those who are working to meet medical emergencies, those in places of war or conflict, and those working to ease the effects of natural disaster. Be with the police too we ask, as they work in places of danger, attending accidents and crimes. We think of our families, those near and those who are far away. Care for them and keep them safe we pray. We pray too for our friends here and the friends that we don't see very often, we ask that you would keep them under your protection as well. Lord God thank you for this place where we live. Thank you for those who built it, those who maintain it and those who staff it. All these prayers we bring before you in Jesus name, and we pray together, THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, For ever and ever, AMEN

HYMN No 31 - Jesus loves me this I know

THE BLESSING

May God sanctify you and may your spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is faithful, He will do it.

And may the blessing of God almighty,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always,

Amen