

Devotion for the week leading to the 3rd of January 2021

This service is written for Stretton Park and McDonald Wing in Maffra, Laurina Lodge in Heyfield and Royal Freemason's in Sale, but with the intention of being available for any who are interested for their private use.

CALL TO WORSHIP - From Psalm 8 we read: When I consider the your heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and stars which You have set in place; who are people, that you think about them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and have crowned them with glory and honour. You have made them rulers over the works of Your hands: all flocks and herds, the beasts of the fields, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. O Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

HYMN No. 22 - All things bright and beautiful

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 O God for the wonderful world that you have created for us to be a part of. Thank you for the hills and the plains, for the beaches and the oceans, for the mountains and the deserts. We thank you for the birds of the air, the animals of the land and the creatures of the seas. Thank you Lord for the beauty all around us and for the love and friendship we experience. Thank you for food and drink and health care.

We are sorry, Lord, for those times over the last year when we have not appreciated all the good things that you have given to us. May we be more appreciative in this coming year. May we also encourage others to see and appreciate all the good things that they do have, rather than just feeling sad about the things they do not have. Help us and strengthen us, we pray, in Jesus name, Amen

HYMN No. 3 - Fill thou my life O Lord, my God, in every part with praise

Today's reading, if you feel like it, is chapters 2, 3,&4 of Ecclesiastes.

REFLECTION

Today's reading comes from the writing of King Solomon, who had the reputation of being very wise. The first two chapters of the book of Solomon re-tell his attempts at finding meaning and fulfilment in his life. He thinks back on his achievements as he tried to find satisfaction in laughter, wine, great civic projects and wealth. He found that chasing these goals were like chasing the wind. They were meaningless. He wondered if it was better to be sane or mad. At that time, life seemed to him to be meaningless. Then we come to that wonderful passage in Solomon's book about : 'there is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven. A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance', and so on. Solomon goes on to say that all the enjoyment we get in life ultimately comes from God. That means that it is right that we enjoy the good things of life. We can also enjoy the work that we do, or have done, and the successes that we have achieved.

Solomon also saw that there was wickedness in the world. Wickedness made the world a worse place to live in for everybody. Often, in the long run, an act of wickedness even makes life worse for the person who did that act.

If we all try to do the best we can to live a life that is positive and helpful, then the whole world will become a better place to live for all people. Jesus told us that this was obeying God and working towards bringing the kingdom of heaven on earth. King Solomon said that this was about finding meaning and purpose in life and pleasing God. However you see it, living a right life - a life of righteousness, is consistent in its message through the thousands of years of the writing of the Old and New Testaments, the message of God through the ages.

HYMN No. 18 - Trust and obey

PRAYER

God our Father, thank you for all you have given us to do in our lives. We thank for the good times that we have enjoyed. Help us to be able to remember those times with pleasure, as a gift from you. The bad times and the sad times have helped to make us who we are. May we be able to leave behind those things that have been harmful to us, but help us to realise that some of those bad times helped us to build the strength of character that we have today. In good times, bad times and hard times, grant wisdom to our leaders, O Lord, so that they can work towards making our good country a better place for all. Be with us and be with those we care for, we pray. Help us to live the kind of lives that you would have us live, making us fulfilled and content. We also bring to you the concerns our own hearts: those things that bring us joy....those things that worry us....and those things that make us glad to be alive....
.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 28 - How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

The BLESSING

May you find contentment in living your life with God throughout this coming year,
And may the blessing of the almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
be upon you and remain with you always, Amen