



HOON HAY Presbyterian CHURCH

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Today's service is led by: Rev. Dr. Michael Reid



Mission Statement

To love and serve the Lord Jesus in the Hoon Hay Community
Worshiping God as a family
Offering opportunities to grow in faith
Sharing God's love with people in our community and beyond

VACCINE PASS REQUIRED FOR ATTENDANCE TODAY

ORDER OF SERVICE

Welcome, Notices and Celebrations

Opening Prayer

Singing: 'As we gather'

Dedication of Offering

RESPONSIVE READING: ¹ It is good to praise the LORD
and make music to your name, O Most High,
Psalm 92: 1-8 ² *proclaiming your love in the morning*
(NIV) *and your faithfulness at night,*
³ to the music of the ten-stringed lyre
and the melody of the harp.
A psalm. A song. ⁴ *For you make me glad by your deeds, LORD;*
For the Sabbath day *I sing for joy at what your hands have done.*
⁵ How great are your works, LORD,
how profound your thoughts!
⁶ Senseless people do not know,
fools do not understand,
⁷ *that though the wicked spring up like grass*
and all evildoers flourish,
they will be destroyed forever.
⁸ *But you, LORD, are forever exalted.*

And we say together the prayer Jesus taught his disciples:

THE LORD'S PRAYER Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be Your Name,
Your Kingdom come,
Your Will be done,
On earth as in Heaven,
Give us today our daily bread,
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil,
For the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory are Yours,
Now and forever.

Amen

Singing: 'Here is love vast as the ocean'

SCRIPTURE READINGS (NIV)

Old Testament

Exodus 2-: 1-21

New Testament

Galatians 5

Intercessory Prayer

Reflection: 'Driving the Point Home' – Galatians 5

READINGS

Exodus 20: 1-21 (NIV)

The Ten Commandments

¹ And God spoke all these words:

² “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

³ “You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷ “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

⁸ “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹² “Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³ “You shall not murder.

¹⁴ “You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ “You shall not steal.

¹⁶ “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

¹⁷ “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.”

¹⁸ When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance ¹⁹ and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.”

²⁰ Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

²¹ The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

Galatians 5 (NIV)

Freedom in Christ

¹ It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

² Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. ³ Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. ⁴ You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

⁷ You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth?

⁸ That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. ⁹ “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.” ¹⁰ I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty. ¹¹ Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. ¹² As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

Life by the Spirit

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

TEACHING NOTES

Galatians 5 is where Paul presses home the thrust of his teaching about the place of the law. What we read is a reflection of both his passion and personality. We don't know the extent of the Judaisers' influence in the province of Galatia but it must have been significant: believers are called to live by faith and be free from all legalism which attempts to either add to the work of the cross or undermine it. Either way, such efforts rely on human effort, i. e. try to observe the law and its protocols, or reduce Christian living to rules (a list of 'don'ts'). As was explained last week, the law reminds us of God's holiness and our need for Christ. The 10 Commandments (Exodus 20) absolutely apply today but living on this side of the cross, we understand that only through Christ are we declared righteous. Paul is emphatic and in Chapter 5 his point is made with sledgehammer force. He heard that many had started well ('were running a good race', v.7) but were now getting drawn into error.

The problem is we would need to *observe the whole law* (v.3) but that of course, is impossible for sinful beings. We just can't do it (be justified; put right with God, v.4) through our own effort no matter how earnest we may be or how hard we try. He illustrates using the practice of circumcision as a case in point. If a male believer chooses to be circumcised that is nothing more than a personal choice: it does not facilitate salvation or divine favour. Faith in Christ which expresses itself in love is what matters (v.6).

Then as now, the tendency to try harder in our own efforts is the default setting of the sinful self. Rather like driving a car on a straight road and taking our hand off the wheel; the car will (usually) just drift slowly to the left and more obviously if the wheels are not balanced and aligned properly. It is the same with the tendency *away from* grace and faith *towards* the law and legalism. Like when driving, in living the Christian life it is important to remain vigilant, stay connected and accountable to the body of Christ, and grow towards maturity by expressing faith in love (service).

To do this we need a proper understanding of both the law and freedom. The law is likened to a 'schoolmaster' (Galatians 3:24, *KJV*) because it reminds us of God's holiness, our need for God's grace in Christ, and the boundaries for godly living in this world (Exodus 20). The 10 Commandments are actually 'fences of freedom' because they help protect us from harming ourselves and others. (Exodus 20:20b)

Christian freedom is not a licence for permissive and sinful living. To believe that is self-deception and likely to lead us on a disastrous pathway. In vv.16-21 Paul outlines the manifestation of the flesh (vices) and then contrasts them with Spirit-led freedom (godly virtues), vv. 22-25. Application: acknowledge in prayer before God the futility and deception in our own efforts to be righteous, and allow His Spirit to begin renewing our hearts and minds to be aligned with Christ and manifest more of those wonderful virtues mentioned at the end of the passage. Against such things there is no law or boundaries, we just keep growing – how freeing!

PASTOR'S REFLECTION

Everyone will have a view on the recent protests in Wellington. Some will see those involved as agitators and lawbreakers whose actions have affected thousands of commuters and disrupted the peace. Others will see what has happened as a legitimate expression of discontent and the right in a democracy to protest.

For its part, mainstream media has almost exclusively focused on the *consequences* of the protest: the disruptions to traffic and life at parliament, and on politicians who refuse to engage with protest organisers. The media has ignored the *causes*: why thousands of otherwise ordinary New Zealanders have resorted to protest. Instead, media sources have tended to stereotype and dismiss the protestors as 'nut cases' out of touch with the pandemic. Parliament's speaker, Trevor Mallard, resorted to having the sprinkler system turned on in a futile attempt to dispel the crowds. This didn't work and only seemed to harden the protestors' resolve. Moreover, the sheer numbers involved and their determination to be heard is too great for a widespread police response. The small number of arrests is probably only a symbolic gesture.

The protestors are from very diverse backgrounds and they reflect and represent many sectors of society. They are not a unified or homogenous group. Certainly, a primary issue is opposition to vaccine mandates and how these have divided the nation and resulted in many thousands who, for whatever reason, have refused to be vaccinated and then lost their jobs. Whatever others may think, that is their choice – but it is a choice with very real consequences restricting the freedoms of these people. Then there are religious and moral conservatives who simply do not like government-led liberal reforms; others from the rural sector who are alarmed at the Three Waters reforms and the impact that climate change laws will have on their livelihoods and the vitality of rural communities. There are even members of more liberal communities who would support many government policies – but have chosen not to be vaccinated and then lost their jobs. A major subset of the faith-based opposition is made up of Destiny Church members who stand alongside their high-profile leader, Brian Tamaki. Some are specifically angered by what they perceive as media bias, and still others are open Trump supporters. What a mix!

It would be fair to say that opposition to the mandates is the one thing most of these groups and individuals have in common. The mainstream media has a duty and obligation to report and objectively examine the causes of the protests rather than simply focus on the consequences. Also, politicians from all parties – people who are elected representatives – likewise have an obligation to acknowledge the issues and make attempts to constructively engage with those feeling disaffected. And, I will add, whatever we as citizens on the sidelines (as it were) may think, and also as believers, we need to be prayerful that justice, honesty, and integrity will prevail in our nation. It can be difficult putting personal views aside, but we are all called to uphold our nation, leaders, and fellow citizens in prayer. These are tough times but we serve an awesome God!

Blessings for a good week,

Michael