

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

Here's an interesting verse for you

Romans 10:4 (NIV - UK)

Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

There's a sermon here on it's own. Jesus is the culmination, or fulfilment of the law, indeed of the whole Old Testament. Why? So that we might be put right, made right, restored freed from the tainting of sin. This freedom is available for all who believe in Jesus. Praise God!

Father, thank you for this time to gather in all our differences this morning. Thank you for this great verse, that reminds us that we can come as we are, that we simply have to believe in Jesus. We don't have to become like someone else. Or become something else. It's just about Jesus. It's about Your grace.

Thank you for your transforming power through the Holy Spirit that gives us life here and now, and in life to come. Thank you for the hope and joy we have in You. Amen.

Message - Problem Solving

This is a call to return to God's agenda - and stick to the basics, love mercy, seek justice, walk humbly - and be part of the Kingdom of God.

Where does the Running of the Bulls take place? What do we have in Feilding? What does Dunedin have? From 2001 to 2018 there was the running of the Jaffas! Up to 75 000 upsized and numbered chocolate jaffas, red first, then purple, were tipped from the top of the world's steepest street, Baldwin Street, to run out of control to the bottom. Each was sponsored, so the winning numbers won prizes.

Such was the speed of these large jaffas, high sides were put up on both sides of the street, to try keep errant jaffas on track! Just as well, as the spectators would have copped some injuries! They would have at least stung. They were solid items!

Some people might feel this is what their lives are like? They've been tipped into the world, and they're racing head long out of control towards the finish? They'd like to go elsewhere, they'd like to make some choices, but barriers restrict them, and gravity pulls them, along with everyone else, in the same direction.

Is your life in control, or out of control? Or are you feeling all smashed and swept up?

How about getting a nice cup of tea, or coffee, and just sitting in a comfortable chair, and lingering for a while in the familiar. The familiar is the arrest of Jesus. Jesus wasn't being arrested for the chief priest to have a little chat. Or to warn Him. He was being arrested so that they could kill Him (v59).

In this most familiar passage, pause, take time, don't speed through. Let's read;

Matthew 26:47-56 (NIV - UK)

Jesus arrested

47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. **48** Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: 'The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.' **49** Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed him.

50 Jesus replied, 'Do what you came for, friend.'[a]

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. 51 With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

52 'Put your sword back in its place,' Jesus said to him, 'for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.'

53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?'

55 In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, 'Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. 56 But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.' Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Footnotes

Matthew 26:50 Or 'Why have you come, friend?'

I reckon if you sat and lingered in this passage you might start to think, hmmm, this is a bit Peter Jackson like (that's the movie maker one). Here we have midnight darkness, lights of flame, swords and blood, and an army of 72 000 angels, on the front foot, at the ready. That would make a great scene in itself. This is big! This is no, simple arrest. There is a bit more going on here.

Indeed, there are different agendas, there are power games, and problem solving.

Ponder the agendas behind each of the characters. You might need a second cup of tea for this. What were these people thinking? What were they trying to achieve? Think about Judas. Matthew keeps bringing him back into the story. Well, what was his agenda? I wonder if v48 is a clue? Judas is now the leader, directing the large crowd. He's calling the shots.

Yes, we know Satan entered Judas (Luke 22:3), but as Susan rightly said, Judas allowed the temptation to percolate. Perhaps in Judas' mind, Jesus was going too slow? Did Judas think he could bring things to the boil? He seemed to think his timing was superior to God's. There's a message for us here about impatience. Judas wanted to direct Jesus' life. Down hill to the finish line wasn't what Judas had in mind.

Judas' agenda is different to that of the high priests and elders. They were also trying to direct Jesus' life. As you sit in your comfortable chair, consider, how was Jesus a threat to them? There was certainly a drift of people towards Jesus. They certainly didn't want their status eroded. Whatever their agenda, Jesus had got under their skin, and in the road. Their agenda became a power game. And once these games reduce to that, there has to be a winner. And the high priests were determined to win.

Peter, v51, one of Jesus' companions, gets criticised for his bravado, of drawing his sword to protect Jesus. Okay, it doesn't say here that it was Peter, but the book of John tells us it was (18:10). But I suspect all the disciples had their hands on weapons, ready to fight. It was only Jesus' quick words that cools their heels, before they took to them.

Now I get their willingness to defend Jesus. I've been part of this scene, acted out in a garden at night, in my 20's, actually very close to Baldwin Street, up Northeast Valley in Dunedin. It was superbly done, and I experienced how emotion can get in the way of clear thinking. It was so easy to imagine standing up for Jesus, even if it was eleven disciples against a large crowd with clubs and swords. But we would have gone down fighting!

But Jesus said, no! Put your swords down.

Now, an aside, this isn't a call to pacifism. This is about not using violence to advance God's Kingdom. What we're called to do is get on board with what God is doing. And use our initiative in line with God's values.

Everyone has a different plan for Jesus' life. They're each manipulating situations to suit their own agenda. Judas, chief priests, Peter...

What other agenda were going on here? God's of course. But also Satan's. In fact, here in the arrest of Jesus, is where the agenda of God and Satan collide. Judas and the high priests are small players in this cosmic showdown.

Here was Satan's big chance to be king. By killing Jesus, God loses, and evil wins. Satan was very confident that he had engineered this perfectly. The forces of evil probably felt they had the upper hand, but there is more going on here.

God had an agenda too. And in this agenda was problem solving. Jesus wasn't the problem. Jesus was the solution to the problem. And the problem had been around for a while, way back in the Garden of Eden.

God had created the earth, and humans, Adam and Eve. All was promising, all was good. But the people were lead astray, lead against God. And ever since Satan has been effective in leading people away, turning people away from God. The result for us was death. Something of a problem.

But as we sit with our cup of tea and ponder God's solution to this problem, we should go 'Wow!' For by going to the cross, to die, Jesus takes the full consequences of Satan's plan. But by God raising Jesus from the dead, God scuppers Satan's agenda, and achieves life not death for us.

Spare a thought for Jesus. What was it like for Jesus? Was He heading downhill out of control?

Remember, Jesus has just come out of a time of intense prayer. How did that time of prayer end? With Jesus saying to the Father, okay, not My will, but Yours be done. Here we see that Jesus is on board with God's agenda, with what was to happen next. And that was His arrest.

Staggering really, Jesus' arrest being endorsed by God! If it wasn't, see v53, Jesus could have requested 12 legions of angels to defend Him! Imagine that! But Jesus doesn't. God could have sent them, but God doesn't. What is happening here, is fully part of God's agenda, God's plan. And verses 54 and 56 confirm that. Jesus' arrest was happening that Scriptures might be fulfilled, that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.

We ponder, I wonder which Old Testament Scriptures should we be looking at? And of course the answer is all of them!

Remember back to 2019, Sunday the 24th March, when we were in the early days of our series through Matthew, we had Matthew 5:17-20. Only four verses! No wonder this has taken so long! Jesus is teaching, and says;

Matthew 5:17-20 New International Version - UK

The fulfilment of the law

17 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.'

Jesus is the fulfilment of the whole Old Testament. Jesus fulfills God's plan for how humanity is to be. And that's the call for us as we go from here, as we consider, how now should we live? We strive to be like Jesus. We strive to be a blessing through the power of the Holy Spirit. But we don't forget the guidance of the Old Testament.

Here for example, is last week's Sunday School verse;

Deuteronomy 10:12 New Living Translation
A Call to Love and Obedience

12 “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? He requires only that you fear the Lord your God, and live in a way that pleases him, and love him and serve him with all your heart and soul.

In J Team they talked about fear being like when the school principal comes into the classroom - remember when you had to stand? It's about respect, not being scared.

Micah 6:8 is another good verse to remind us how we are to be;

Micah 6:8 (NIV - UK)

8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

 And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

 and to walk humbly with your God.

If we stop and linger, preferably with a cup of tea, in these verses of Jesus' arrest, you can see how we don't have to fear the rat race, or the jaffa race. We can appreciate where we're at, accepting Jesus, believing in Jesus. We can hold onto God's agenda, living as part of God's kingdom.

Benediction

Hebrews 13:20-21 New Living Translation

20 Now may the God of peace—

 who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus,
 the great Shepherd of the sheep,

 and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—

21 may he equip you with all you need

 for doing his will.

May he produce in you,[a]

 through the power of Jesus Christ,

every good thing that is pleasing to him.

 All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.