

Acts 19:1-22
Feilding Baptist
20.10.24

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship at Feilding Baptist!

Micah 6:8 was the verse that was significant to Brian Philips who we farewellled on Friday.

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.

It has this word mortal, that comes up in Psalm 9. Ah, I thought, nice link, but only in English, different Hebrew words. But same point. We're not to think we are God. As we come to worship, listen to Psalm 9

Psalm 9[a][b]

For the director of music. To the tune of 'The Death of the Son'. A psalm of David.

1 I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.
2 I will be glad and rejoice in you;
I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High.
3 My enemies turn back;
they stumble and perish before you.
4 For you have upheld my right and my cause,
sitting enthroned as the righteous judge.
5 You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked;
you have blotted out their name for ever and ever.
6 Endless ruin has overtaken my enemies,
you have uprooted their cities;
even the memory of them has perished.
7 The Lord reigns for ever;
he has established his throne for judgment.
8 He rules the world in righteousness
and judges the peoples with equity.
9 The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
10 Those who know your name trust in you,

for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

11 Sing the praises of the Lord, enthroned in Zion;
proclaim among the nations what he has done.
12 For he who avenges blood remembers;
he does not ignore the cries of the afflicted.
13 Lord, see how my enemies persecute me!
Have mercy and lift me up from the gates of death,
14 that I may declare your praises
in the gates of Daughter Zion,
and there rejoice in your salvation.
15 The nations have fallen into the pit they have dug;
their feet are caught in the net they have hidden.
16 The Lord is known by his acts of justice;
the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands.[c]
17 The wicked go down to the realm of the dead,
all the nations that forget God.
18 But God will never forget the needy;
the hope of the afflicted will never perish.
19 Arise, Lord, do not let mortals triumph;
let the nations be judged in your presence.
20 Strike them with terror, Lord;
let the nations know they are only mortal.

Father God, there is so much here to give you thanks for. When we're down, you do care. You don't forget us. You are the righteous judge. You rule in righteousness. Father thank you for caring about us, remembering us, and sending Jesus, to give us life, and give us hope. Thank you that Jesus is the ultimate power, that death and darkness are no match for Him. Holy Spirit, please give us confidence in our worship and awe of our God, Amen.

Message - Compliance

Faith in Jesus includes the Holy Spirit, enabling us to make the Kingdom of God known.

A new minister noticed that on communion Sunday one person would bring their cat to church. The minister thought that was a bit strange, and thought, oh well. But then the minister noticed that when being served the communion wafer the woman would break it in half and give half to the cat.

Several previous ministers it turned out had tried to reason with the woman, but she continued to feed the cat at communion. Why, because she believed the cat was the reincarnation of her late husband (Wright, 111). True story.

Well, this is Hindu belief, not Christian, believing that we will return in whatever form we deserve. If we're bad, we might return as, say a rat, only my opinion, those who like rats would imagine they would return as a rat for being very good! Christian belief is that we rise from death as Jesus with fully human bodies

Philippians 3:20-21 New Living Translation

20 But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. 21 He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

What people believe, and the growth of belief is the feature of the end of Acts 18 and the start of Acts 19. And it's the type of baptism that you have accepted, that shows where you're at with your faith, with your beliefs.

The original form of baptism was for those who wanted to become Jews, well, wanted to convert to Judaism. It was a ritual that people went through to become part of that religion. Jews were by birth part of Judaism, so for them to be baptised was offensive.

John the Baptist then turned up and was baptising as a sign of repentance, a sign of turning to God. But John kept telling people about one who would come, who would baptise with the Holy Spirit. John always pointed people to Jesus. He knew his baptism was only for that time.

The baptism of Jesus is a sign of allegiance, a humble step, saying I want to follow this man who is God. I want to be His apprentice, to grow to be like Him, like the Master that He is. This is still why we baptise today.

So you can see there's something of 'compliance' here, this word of our times. The church is catching up with society in becoming compliant in all sorts of areas, health and safety policies, evacuation procedures, child protection policies. The way we did things before is no longer compliant. And there's something in that with these three forms of baptism. And the story of the cat. The earlier versions don't go far enough, don't comply, and the cat lady has formed a hybrid religion that simply isn't Christian, and goes too far.

How did we get here? We ended last week with the governor (or mayor) turning a blind eye to the synagogue leader being beaten up in front of him, verse 17 of chapter 18 in Acts. He had the power and authority to stop it, but he lets it go.

Usually it is Paul being beaten up, but he had been reassured by God in a dream, that he would not be harmed. And God's word was true. Paul wasn't. And he gets to leave Corinth, safe and sound.

With him are the tentmakers, Priscilla and Aquila going by ship to Ephesus, where Paul stops briefly before continuing on his own back to Antioch and Jerusalem. And this ended his second missionary journey. Immediately it seems, Paul is back on the road, and the third missionary begins, over land back towards Ephesus. I found myself reading these verses several times until I realised that Paul's visits to Ephesus are at different times.

Ephesus is another huge city, half a million people, so not as big as Corinth, but a very significant Roman base. And as it turns out, a very important and useful base for Paul for the next two years.

Ah, but before Paul arrives, v24 of Acts 18, a guy from the huge and scholarly city of Alexandria, Egypt, turns up, Apollos. He is a great communicator, he speak with power, the word fervour in Greek means 'to boil'! So imagine the type of preaching this was!

25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervour[a] and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.

But Priscilla and Aquila note that while Apollos is a brilliant teacher, there is something missing when he talked about Jesus.

26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

But what Priscilla and Aquila do is such a contrast to what the Jewish leaders did to Paul and Silas. When they didn't agree with what they were hearing, they said so in public. They made a scene, argued, and often it got violent.

Priscilla and Aquila take Apollos home for a cuppa and have a chat! How much more powerful is that?! Because to invite home someone you are really angry with, requires some strength and humility. Causing a public scene could be seen as an attempt to get others on your side, even promoting yourself.

What Apollos was saying was good, he knows about Jesus, but he doesn't seem to be aware of Pentecost. He would have been aware of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit is in the Old Testament, and in the life of Jesus. Apollos is preaching about Jesus, from the perspective of John's baptism. Knowing about Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all believers, makes quite a difference. [v27, who by grace, believed]

That brings us to chapter 19, let's read;

Acts 19:1-10 (NIV - UK)

Paul in Ephesus

1 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2 and asked them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when[a] you believed?'

They answered, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.'

3 So Paul asked, 'Then what baptism did you receive?'

'John's baptism,' they replied.

4 Paul said, 'John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' 5 On hearing this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues[b] and prophesied. 7 There were about twelve men in all.

8 Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. 9 But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. 10 This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

Footnotes

Acts 19:2 Or after

Acts 19:6 Or other languages

What was Paul seeing or hearing for him to ask the question, about receiving the Holy Spirit? What distinguishes people who have the Spirit from those who don't? Is it always obvious? Should it be? Should we be checking? What was Paul seeing or sensing?

Whatever it was, he was spot on, for they hadn't even heard about the Holy Spirit. For Paul, you can't have faith without the Holy Spirit. These people are very different to Apollos a few verses earlier. They were still living in the Old Testament. These people are not Christian at all, they don't seem aware of even Jesus, where Apollos taught about Jesus accurately.

Faith includes these four elements; repentance, faith in Jesus, water baptism, gift of the Spirit (Stott, 305). The Spirit isn't an optional extra. What difference does the Spirit make in our lives? The Spirit isn't only about how we worship. How do you think the people here were impacted after their baptism? There are 12 of them, and their families, a good sized group, I imagine they had a very big impact for the Kingdom of God in their part of Ephesus.

And indeed, the impact for the Kingdom of God in the province (not continent) of Asia was huge, v10, all the Jews and Greeks in this province heard about Jesus.

How's that going in New Zealand? A full page article in yesterday's paper reminded us that religion is on the way out in New Zealand. The evidence is the Census data, where over 50% of people now declare they have No Religion. Now, I'm just old enough to remember that when you filled in the form many years ago, it was about referring to the denomination you were, so that declared you Christian. It had nothing to do with allegiance to Jesus, or even attending church on a regular basis.

I'm not sure too much has changed, people are answering the question more honestly. Let's not think the Kingdom of God is becoming less. So how can our churches argue persuasively about the Kingdom of God as the people in Ephesus did? It might be in actions, as well as words. It might be allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus through us...

Faith in Jesus includes the Holy Spirit, enabling us to make the Kingdom of God known. Makes us compliant.