

18th July | 8th Sunday after

We have been



made alive with Christ.



We gather today, still amidst the latest challenges that our Nation and in particular our state faces, with this latest Covid outbreak, and the necessary lock downs and restrictions, that are required to ensure our protection as communities from this outbreak, this temporary of sacrifice of the isolation from loved ones, disruptions to normal daily lives, all very stressful!

However, may we be joyful and encouraged in the many opportunities, we the church are presented with to reach out with the actions of love and compassion to our wider community, as we live out our life's calling as a Christian Community in Action!

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, as we gather together as living stones, part of your Church, we ask the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts, kindling in them the fire of your love. Almighty God, speak to us through your Holy Spirit, and as we walk in the light of your Spirit may we grow in wisdom, always rejoicing in the comfort He brings, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I don't know about you, but I find today's Gospel reading and our New Testament passages so reassuring, uplifting and comforting, ***messages of key importance for all of us to grasp and hold onto, that Jesus*** is the true shepherd and that we are called to recognise, treasure and live in the unity between us.

Our Gospel reading today from St Mark, when Jesus sees the men of Galilee like sheep without a shepherd, and then later feeds the 5,000.

Jesus reveals himself as the shepherd sent by God, bringing them the promised peace and rest. Fulfilling the prophecy of Jeremiah of God's justice, and how this will be properly communicated to his people.

In our so called advanced society that we in Australia, were most of us have what is described. "comfortable living", there feels to be many who seem to be like sheep without any shepherd.

They appear to be blown along and tossed like corks amid the winds and waves of the changing dynamics of our society, seeking solace in what is bombarded on TV screens, emails, mobile phones, some print media, the list seems endless of false promises of self-indulgence, what's

good for you, this will make you much better in wealth, health prosperity all at a cost, and may I suggest none bringing true fulfilment!

Aren't we surely are blessed, knowing that Christ alone offers a steady and unfailing point of reference! Bringing us that peace which passes all understanding to us, reassuring us that in Christ we have a future.

*This leads us to today's epistle, from the letter to the Ephesians, that tells us one of the greatest Pauline (and Christians) doctrines – **the reconciliation of all people comes about through the peace of Christ.***

"Christ is the peace between us, and has made the two into one",

Paul is trying to offer the beginnings of an answer "why" to God's mysterious plan for humankind. Paul is convinced that the Church mediates knowledge of God's universal plan, because Christ is her head.

The major difficulty arises from the position of the Jewish people, referred to as "those who are near at hand", possessing God's law and his promises.

We need to understand, that for Jews, separation from the gentiles was essential to protect purity of spirit and race. Unfortunately, today, we now have sects, so called "Christians" proclaiming that same misguided ideology!

Is it little wonder why those outside the Church struggle to have a living faith and feeling of belonging, when faced with these obstacles!

The awareness of the Church as one universal family gave Paul insight into a solution.

Christ's sacrifice began a new creation. Isn't that a wonderful statement!

As the new Adam, Christ built up a new human race without the great Jew – Gentile division. The Gentiles, that's us, were far from God, they are now brought into the harmony of God's family. Both Jew & Gentile receive the same Spirit of reconciliation.

Peace between God and all people, as brothers and sisters, is now a real possibility.

May I relate a wonderful example and outcome of Christian unity, from my personal life.

Kairos Inside for men. As a team, we come together, gathered from many denominations, under the leadership of Christ, all professing the Apostles Creed and all particular denominational beliefs and practices, as volunteers we are to lay those differences aside during the Kairos experience and respect each other's denomination.

The outcome.....over the four days of Christian Community, the boys in green have commented ... so you all go to the same church! That's unity in Christ!

Let me summarise today's message, let us remember that:

Because Jesus came to our world in the flesh,

- We are now familiar and beloved to each other, instead of unrecognised and untrustworthy.
- We are all now part of God's family.
- We can, together, be built up into the place where God lives on Earth, where He may be visited and worshipped and known.
- Our bodies are familiar with the Holy Spirit, and through Him, with the Father.

Thanks be to God!

Amen