

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 07 August 2022
Services: *Across the diocese*
Series: Sharing Jesus for Life
Title: Jesus
Passage: Colossians 1:15-23
Outline:

Jesus

- 1. Central to the world**
- 2. Central to the church**
- 3. Central to our life**

- Just over a week ago, we launched the diocesan strategic plan with the catch phrase '*Sharing Jesus for life*'.
- We are spending **three** sermons – of which today's is the **second** – exploring the three key words of the catch phrase – **SHARING JESUS** for **LIFE**
- It is no accident, that **JESUS** is at the centre of our catch phrase... for Jesus must be the very **heart and centre** of our **plans** and of course our **lives** and our **churches**. //
- Many of you will know that presently many bishops from around the Anglican Communion have gathered in Canterbury for what is called the Lambeth conference...
- This conference happens every 10 years or so... and runs for nearly two weeks... every Anglican bishop from around the world is invited for prayer and discussion
- In an interview following day 1, one of the bishops was asked what were his great hopes for the conference...
- He answered... "my great hope is that we are able to make some progress on the whole issue of climate change".
- And I thought – how sad.
- Climate change *IS* an issue for the world – but would it be on the top of my list for hope for a gathering of Anglican bishops? Not at all.
- Read the motions from the **synods** of some dioceses around Australia – and the agenda is full of **climate change, refugee advocacy, LGBTQ issues, indigenous reconciliation...**
- ...but very **little** – sometime **NOTHING** about **Jesus**...
- **Nothing** about **sharing** the news of **Jesus**
- **Nothing** about the need for people to hear of **Jesus' love and mercy and invitation to come be forgiven**.
- Reminds me of the story of the man who only went to church at Christmas and Easter and complained to the minister that he was in rut because every time he came, he was going on about Jesus! ///
- Now – please hear – me: I don't think churches in **our** diocese have **lost** their **way** and made something other than **JESUS** their **focus**...!
- But what this **centre** section of the strategic plan is designed to do is **strengthen** our **resolve** to ensure **JESUS** is always **first** and **foremost** in what we do as **church**.
- I hope someone says to me at the end of my time here – for all the time you've been **bishop** – you've been **going on** about **Jesus**...!!! //

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- I was quoted in an article in the **Melbourne Anglican** newspaper recently, about how I wished the Lambeth conference was **focused** on **Jesus**... and that when you make **Jesus** central to everything you are and do, then everything **else** which is **important** – falls into **place** and receives **appropriate attention**...
- So we're going to spend a little time this morning in Colossians 1:15-23, so that we might understand **WHY Jesus** is to be **central**.

here's where we are heading...

Jesus

1. Central to the **world**
2. Central to the **church**
3. Central to our **life**

- Frist:

1. CENTRAL TO THE WORLD

- Have a look with me – ¹⁶ *For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.* ¹⁷ *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*
- Created **IN** him **THROUGH** him **FOR** him...
- The very **creation** you and I enjoy **every day** – is all about **Jesus**...
- **Through** him, **from** him, **for** him
- Everything you can **see**
- Everything you **can't** see
- He was around **before** creation... not **part** of creation
- And only because he holds everything together does it all still **work** – **exist**
- Only because he **wills** it does the **earth** rotate on its axis, **move** around the **sun**...
- Only because he **wills** it does your **heart** still **beat**...
- **Central** in **creation**
- second:

2. CENTRAL TO THE CHURCH

- v18 – have a look with me – *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*
- **I'm** not the head of the church – **praise God!** **Jesus alone** is in that **position**...
- **v15** said he was **firstborn** over all **creation**; **v18** – first born from among the **dead**...
- That's not referring to any sort of **literal** birth – but Jesus' **pre-eminence**
- The **first** in **creation**; the first in the **new creation** – being the first to have been **raised** from the **dead**.
- But there is **more** here to convince us of the centrality of Jesus... v19 – have a look - *For God was pleased*

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to have all his fullness dwell in him,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

- Reminds us of 2 Cor 5 from last week doesn't it? – that God was **in Christ** – **reconciling** the world to **himself**.
- God himself **dwelt** in the **Lord Jesus...** he was **God** on **earth...** and through his **blood shed** on the **cross...** / **peace** with **God** – **reconciliation** with **God** has been made **possible....**
- Jesus is not only the **head** of the **body** – but his **death and resurrection** - the **very means** by which we can come **back** into **relationship** with God and **BE** the **body** of **Christ...** ///
- I hope you can see then – Jesus – central to **creation**, central to the **church**, and **finally**: Jesus **MUST** therefore be:

3. CENTRAL TO OUR LIFE

- Because – v21 - *Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour.* ²² *But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation*
- Praise God... isn't that just **amazing** and **wonderful**!
- How can Jesus **NOT** be central to our lives...?
- We **owe** him our **life**!
- He **death** brought us **life**
- his **death** has made us **holy** – which is explained here as being without **blemish** – **free** from **accusation**!
- And then Paul says – this remains the case – v23 - *if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.*
- ...so **there's** the **challenge** – to **CONTINUE** in your **faith** – **continue** making **Jesus central** – **established** and **firm** – not **moving** from the **hope** held out in the **gospel....** to **anything** or **anyone else...//** **Jesus focussed** through and through! ////
- So – **Jesus**
- Central to **creation**, central to the **church**, and central to our **lives...**
- And **THEREFORE** – central to our **strategic plan** and **central** to our life **together in this diocese.**

- I want to finish then today... but taking you through that **centre** column of our **strategic plan** – it would be good if you had a copy **handy...**
- Here's the vision – that we are a

A **JESUS - CENTRED** church where Jesus is worshipped in spirit and truth and the Bible is clearly taught.

Our churches are to be **ALL** about **Jesus...**

And the reason we've added '*and the Bible clearly taught*', is that **clear teaching** of the **Bible** will always

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take us BACK to **Jesus** as **central!** //

This emphasis is picked up in terms of its impact on our **church services...** for the way we **do** church is extremely important...: so the plan reads:

Church services in which Jesus is **central**, and God's Word is preached **clearly** and applied **powerfully**

Clear, relevant prayers, Bible readings and songs that are **Jesus-centred** and **Gospel focused**

This is about doing what we already do – BETTER, MORE CLEARLY - more INTENTIONAL... I do think in some churches – song or hymn choices could be better, prayers – shorter – clearer – more gospel focused – less lists of things... that the Bible could be read more passionately – clearly!

A then – moving down the column - a **purposeful, passionate focus** on **Jesus** will also impact our **Bible studies**: the plan reads:

- Develop a growing number of **ongoing Bible study groups** that are **Bible-based** and **Jesus-focused**

Bible study groups that – study the Bible – and more than social occasions...: and

- Co-ordination of **Bible studies** with the preaching program – so that what is taught on Sunday is followed up during the week with how impacts our world...

All of that will help us keep **Jesus central** //

But then – look at all these other steps...

- Foster **dependence upon Jesus** by a commitment to regular corporate **prayer** that underpins and upholds all church programs and ministries
- Encourage **obedience** to **Jesus** by the intentional pursuit of personal and corporate holiness
- Reflect the **love** of **Jesus** by the intentional pursuit of love, forgiveness, unity and hospitality within the church
- Revel in the **grace** of Jesus through the joyful and reverent celebration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- Honour Jesus through the **generous, sacrificial giving of time, talents and money** by church members
- Faithfully **serve** Jesus through **wise governance** of the **church** and **good stewardship** of **resources**
- **Model** Jesus by the establishment and nurturing of **godly leaders** who are led by the **Spirit of Christ** and **reflect Jesus** to the **church**.

All this is about turning up the **spiritual temperature** of our **churches...**

So that **every** person is a **passionate** and **dedicated Jesus follower**

The Bible doesn't depict **two** types of Christians – the **ordinary** ones who church turn up once a week – and the **super keen ones** who are **involved** in **everything...**

No such thing in the Bible...

No, to be a **disciple** of **Jesus** is to make him the **singular focus** of – **purpose** of your **life...**

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And a critical part of our **thinking** in the strategic plan – and in this **part** of the strategic plan – is that when you have churches full of **people** – **clear and passionate about Jesus... focused** on him, **driven** by his love, **inspired** by his grace, **moved** by his compassion... **convinced** he is the WAY the TRUTH and the LIFE and the only way to the Father; **convicted** that only by Jesus' death and resurrection is **reconciliation** with God **possible**... // then they **WILL** be keen to **share Jesus** with **others!** It will be their natural **heart's desire!** You won't **stop** them!!

Indicators... if we're **getting** this **right** – down towards the **foot** of this **central column**, here is what we can expect to see:

- ↑ understanding of the **Gospel**
- ↑ **number of Bible study groups**
- ↑ **obvious love and unity**
- ↑ **hospitality** in each other's **homes**
- ↑ **people** attending **prayer meetings**
- ↑ people attending **services regularly**
- ↑ health of **finances** and **resources**

...that is what happens in churches where Jesus is central and everyone is keen and clear and passionate about serving and honour Jesus and living entirely for him.

I trust you may continue to look prayerfully and carefully over the strategic plan – and see what are the **3-4 ideas** which you can **immediately implement** which will make a difference in the **life** and **ministry** of your **church**...

...in THIS instance – from this **centre** column – so that **Jesus** – **central to creation**

Central to **church**

...might **indeed** be central to our **lives**, our **ministries**, our **plans**, our **passions**, our very **reason** for **being**.