



1 SEPTEMBER 2024



Happy Father's Day to all our dads and honorary dads, we hope you have a great day !

Welcome to Rev Geoff Stevenson, Chairperson of our Parramatta-Nepean Presbytery who will be preaching this morning.

Lectionary readings

This week 1 September, 2024

Song of Songs 2:8-13
Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9
James 1:17-27
Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Next Sunday 8 September, 2024

Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 2-23
Psalm 125
James 2:1-10, (11-13), 14-17
Mark 7:24-37

Ladies Bible Study

Ladies Bible Study will meet on Tuesday afternoon at 3pm in the chapel, they are looking at Study 5 :The Lord at the Centre" - Proverbs 14:1-16:9.



NORTH ROCKS COMMUNITY CHURCH

FAIR TRADE MARKET

SATURDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2024

9am - 2pm
132 North Rocks Rd, North Rocks
FREE ENTRY

Choose to buy fair trade products to help create a brighter future for millions of farmers, workers, and their families in developing countries.

Why not give fair trade gifts for Christmas this year which will give joy to both producer and receiver!


- * Jewellery
- * Fashion
- * Homewares
- * Bags
- * Toys
- * Body care
- * Fairtrade food products



Morning tea, Delicious Cakes & Sausage
Sizzle also available

NORTH ROCKS COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Rigid Religion or Liberating Love?

This week, Jesus is confronted by religious leaders, come down from Jerusalem to check him out – again. They observed to find things that were wrong and confront him. The particular issue they identified was about the ritual cleansing of hands, food and utensils prior to eating food. It wasn't about germs and making things clean as we might think but about the purity code, and especially as interpreted through the traditions of the Elders. Essentially, this code was designed to help the people understand who they were and maintain the integrity of their faith and culture in a world that was diverse and challenging, where there were various faiths, cultures, powers and seductions. It was a way of understanding who they were and to hold to their particular values and way in the world. The trouble is that it became a means of controlling who was in/out, right/wrong, good/evil... It became a means of defining who was included and who was excluded – and this particularly pertained to defining who was loved by, or excluded from, God. They were indicating that Jesus and his disciples were engaging in unclean, unholy practices.

Jesus responded by dismantling their arguments, suggesting that traditions of Elders were not the basis of the law of God. In fact, it wasn't the things that go into the body that define a person but what comes out. It is the practice of our life that reflects the character of our being and the reality of faith and life in God – or not. Ultimately it is about love and if we live into deep, generous, gracious love, we will reflect very powerfully the love and reality of God. This will define who we are in a very positive manner!

The Gospel writers, writing in the latter part of the 1st century, were seeking to help their communities understand how to live as followers of Jesus in a hostile and challenging world. There were diverse faiths, different cultures and significant power structures within the Roman Empire and the Empire was not favourable to the Christians, whom they persecuted. How do they live in that challenging world? How do they maintain the integrity of faith, culture and life as followers of Jesus, especially as the separation from Jewish faith, out of which they were birthed, becomes a reality?

For Jesus, the answer was not circling the wagons and defending themselves and hiding from a hostile world. It wasn't to fall back on rigid beliefs, traditions, or rituals to define who is in and who is out. It wasn't about exclusion and rejection of those who are different. It was about love and relationships! It was about embracing people and listening to their story, to open a conversation around hopes and dreams, fears and pain, and to share the hope and life within them. It was about going the extra mile to be love towards those who were different, or even enemies. In this way, the world would know they were his followers, and they might see something that they wanted for themselves – it was certainly the case in the early stories of Jesus' ministry and the early church. Through these stories, the writers were seeking to remind their communities of the alternate way of love.

Geoff Stevenson