

NEW YEAR | LENT 2024
SUNDAY & MIDWEEK READINGS

07-Jan **GOOD NEWS FOR THE NEW YEAR | From self-made to renewed by grace**
Psalm 51:1-12 | Galatians 5:16-26

14-Jan **THE GOSPEL STORY | The power of God for salvation**
Isaiah 40:18-26 | Romans 1:16-25

21-Jan **GOSPEL SHAPED GIVING | The transforming grace of God**
Ezekiel 36:22-32 | Mark 2:1-12

28-Jan **THE GOSPEL STORY | Revealing God's goodness**
Isaiah 53:1-6 | Romans 3:21-26

04-Feb **GOSPEL SHAPED GIVING | The abundant grace of God**
Isaiah 25:6-9 | John 2:1-12

11-Feb **THE GOSPEL STORY | The dominion of grace leading to eternal life**
Genesis 3:1-9 | Romans 5:12-21

LENT

18-Feb **GOSPEL SHAPED GIVING | The undeserved grace of God**
Jeremiah 31:31-34 | John 8:1-11

25-Feb **THE GOSPEL STORY | No longer enslaved to Sin**
Ezekiel 18:30-32 | Romans 6:1-14

03-Mar **GOSPEL SHAPED CHURCH | Responding to the grace of God**
Micah 4:1-5 | Luke 19:1-10

10-Mar **THE GOSPEL STORY | Life to our mortal bodies**
Joel 2 | Romans 8:1-17

17-Mar **Reconsecration Weekend**
2 Chronicles 29:1-12a, 15-19 | Hebrews 6:1-12

24-Mar **PALM SUNDAY**
Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 | Mark 11:1-11

31-Mar **EASTER MORNING**
Acts 10:34-43 | John 20:1-18

NEW YEAR & LENT 24

Themes and outline

Through the Autumn and winter months, leading up to Advent and then to Christmas, we have been following the Lectionary readings each week and the themes of Jesus return, the day of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, the coming day of judgement, and the making of new heavens and a new earth, have repeated themselves again and again. We have been drenched in the eschatological story of the gospel.

As the year turns and we begin again, looking ahead to the Spring and to Easter, I have constructed a series that aims to weave two aspects of the gospel together each supporting and developing the other. One week we will be travelling through Paul's letter to the Roman church as they grappled with the undeserved grace of God for both Jew and Gentile and the weeks after we will return to familiar and joyful stories from the Gospels where Jesus embodies and demonstrates how the grace of God works to surprise, transform and liberate people from the inside out, making them new in heart, body, mind and spirit – free from sin and liberated into righteous living.

One week Paul. The next week Jesus. Then Paul. Then Jesus. And so on, until we arrive at Jerusalem, for the final week of Jesus' life and watch how grace fully expresses itself in sacrifice, self-emptying, and resurrection power.

You will also notice that there is an accompanying Old Testament passage that adds flavour and background context, as we see how God's covenant of grace with Israel is fulfilled in Jesus and his inclusion of Gentiles into the story.

The overarching focus is the gospel about the grace of God, his outrageous, overwhelmingly generous, utterly undeserved, and totally transformative grace. His amazing grace.

This grace is the foundation of our lives as Jesus' followers and disciples. It is the rock upon which everything else we build rests. It is the centre and core of our religion and spirituality. It is the motivating heart of our worship and response.

And so, as we drink deeply again from the well of grace, we will also be encouraging one another to rethink and reflect on our own graciousness, our own generosity, our own giving.

Join the journey. Come eager to learn and hear and respond. Listen out for the sound and rhythms of grace that emanate from the throne room of God. Allow yourself to be drawn in and wooed by God's love and then be open to seeing how being immersed in this grace might transform and change your own life.

We have seen his glory. Full of grace and truth. Let's feast on this grace together this term.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE NEW YEAR | FROM SELF MADE TO RENEWED BY GRACE

Psalm 51:1-12

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
- ² Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
- ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.
- ⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
- ⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
- ⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Galatians 5:16-26

¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever^[a] you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

THE GOSPEL STORY | THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION

Isaiah 40:18-26

¹⁸ With whom, then, will you compare God?

To what image will you liken him?

¹⁹ As for an idol, a metalworker casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold
and fashions silver chains for it.

²⁰ A person too poor to present such an offering
selects wood that will not rot;

they look for a skilled worker
to set up an idol that will not topple.

²¹ Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

²² He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,
and its people are like grasshoppers.

He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

²³ He brings princes to naught
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

²⁴ No sooner are they planted,
no sooner are they sown,
no sooner do they take root in the ground,
than he blows on them and they wither,
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

²⁵ 'To whom will you compare me?

Or who is my equal?' says the Holy One.

²⁶ Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:
who created all these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one
and calls forth each of them by name.

Because of his great power and mighty strength,
not one of them is missing.

Romans 1:16-25

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed – a righteousness that is by faith from first to last,^[e] just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'

¹⁸ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is for ever praised. Amen.

GOSPEL SHAPED GIVING | The transforming grace of God

Ezekiel 36:22-32

²² Therefore say to the Israelites, "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: it is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. ²³ I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.

²⁴ "For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. ²⁸ Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the corn and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. ³⁰ I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine. ³¹ Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. ³² I want you to know that I am not doing this for your sake, declares the Sovereign Lord. Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, people of Israel!

Mark 2:1-12

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralysed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralysed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'

⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ 'Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'

⁸ Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, 'Why are you thinking these things? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to this paralysed man, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up, take your mat and walk"? ¹⁰ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.' So he said to the man, ¹¹ 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' ¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'

THE GOSPEL STORY | Revealing God's goodness

Isaiah 53:1-6

Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

² He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

⁴ Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

Romans 3:21-26

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished ²⁶ – he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

GOSPEL SHAPED GIVING | The abundant grace of God

Isaiah 25:6-9

⁶ On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare
a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine –
the best of meats and the finest of wines.

⁷ On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;

⁸ he will swallow up death for ever.
The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth.
The Lord has spoken.

⁹ In that day they will say,
'Surely this is our God;
we trusted in him, and he saved us.
This is the Lord, we trusted in him;
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.'

John 2:1-12

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.'

⁴ 'Woman, ^[a] why do you involve me?' Jesus replied. 'My hour has not yet come.'

⁵ His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'

⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from eighty to a hundred and twenty litres.

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water'; so they filled them to the brim.

⁸ Then he told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.'

They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, 'Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.'

¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

THE GOSPEL STORY | The dominion of grace leading to eternal life

Genesis 3:1-9

Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?'

²The woman said to the snake, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."'

⁴'You will not certainly die,' the snake said to the woman. ⁵'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'

Romans 5:12-21

¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned –

¹³ To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: the judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

¹⁸ Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. ¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

²⁰ The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

GOSPEL SHAPED GIVING | The undeserved grace of God

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹ 'The days are coming,' declares the Lord,
'when I will make a new covenant
with the people of Israel
and with the people of Judah.

³² It will not be like the covenant
I made with their ancestors
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to them,'
declares the Lord.

³³ 'This is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel
after that time,' declares the Lord.

'I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God,
and they will be my people.

³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbour,
or say to one another, "Know the Lord,"
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,'
declares the Lord.

'For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.'

John 8:1-11

¹ But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered round him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'

¹¹ 'No one, sir,' she said. 'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin.'

THE GOSPEL STORY | No longer enslaved to Sin

Ezekiel 18:30-32

³⁰ Therefore, you Israelites, I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent! Turn away from all your offences; then sin will not be your downfall. ³¹ Rid yourselves of all the offences you have committed and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel? ³² For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!

Romans 6:1-14

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – ⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

GOSPEL SHAPED CHURCH | Responding to the grace of God

Micah 4:1-5

In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established
as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills,
and peoples will stream to it.

² Many nations will come and say,

'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.

He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths.'

The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

³ He will judge between many peoples
and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.

They will beat their swords into ploughshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war any more.

⁴ Everyone will sit under their own vine
and under their own fig-tree,
and no one will make them afraid,
for the Lord Almighty has spoken.

⁵ All the nations may walk
in the name of their gods,
but we will walk in the name of the Lord
our God for ever and ever.

Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.' ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, 'He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.'

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.'

⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.'

THE GOSPEL STORY | Life to our mortal bodies

Joel 2:28-32

²⁸ Then afterwards I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.

²⁹ Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

³⁰ I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. ³² Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

Romans 8:1-17

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you[Ⓜ] free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life[Ⓜ] because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of[Ⓜ] his Spirit who lives in you.

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation – but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.[Ⓜ] And by him we cry, 'Abba,

Father.' ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

RECONSECRATION WEEKEND

2 Chronicles 29:1-11, 15-17

Hezekiah purifies the temple

29 Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. ² He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done.

³ In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the Lord and repaired them. ⁴ He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the square on the east side ⁵ and said, 'Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the Lord, the God of your ancestors. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary. ⁶ Our parents were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the Lord our God and forsook him. They turned their faces away from the Lord's dwelling-place and turned their backs on him. ⁷ They also shut the doors of the portico and put out the lamps. They did not burn incense or present any burnt offerings at the sanctuary to the God of Israel. ⁸ Therefore, the anger of the Lord has fallen on Judah and Jerusalem; he has made them an object of dread and horror and scorn, as you can see with your own eyes. ⁹ This is why our fathers have fallen by the sword and why our sons and daughters and our wives are in captivity. ¹⁰ Now I intend to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger will turn away from us. ¹¹ My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before him and serve him, to minister before him and to burn incense.'

¹⁵ When they had assembled their fellow Levites and consecrated themselves, they went in to purify the temple of the Lord, as the king had ordered, following the word of the Lord. ¹⁶ The priests went into the sanctuary of the Lord to purify it. They brought out to the courtyard of the Lord's temple everything unclean that they found in the temple of the Lord. The Levites took it and carried it out to the Kidron Valley. ¹⁷ They began the consecration on the first day of the first month, and by the eighth day of the month they reached the portico of the Lord. For eight more days they consecrated the temple of the Lord itself, finishing on the sixteenth day of the first month.

Hebrews 6:1-12

Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death,^[a] and of faith in God, ² instruction about cleansing rites,^[b] the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And God permitting, we will do so.

⁴ It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age ⁶ and who have fallen^[c] away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. ⁷ Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. ⁸ But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

⁹ Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case – the things that have to do with salvation. ¹⁰ God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help

them. ¹¹We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. ¹²We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.