

Sunday 4 October 2020
Glynde Lutheran Church
Sermon on Philippians 3:4b – 13
Theme: Garbage out! God in!

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ.

⁸More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but **this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,** ¹⁴**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.**

Intro) Have you ever been tramping in Kosciusko National Park in NSW?

It was one of our **favourite** places when we lived in Canberra

The **Lakes Walk** is 22km in a loop starting and ending at Charlottes Pass

Before you get to Mt Kosciusko itself, you come to the only shelter at **Seaman's Hut**
about an hour and a quarter into what usually took us about **six hours**

From there you can look across a valley to **Mt Townsend**

There is a **track** going down into the valley, which is a shortcut if you don't want to go to Australia's highest mountain—which is a bit of a disappointment at **2,228m**

At first the track is **easy to follow**—you can see Mt Townsend

As you head down into the valley the track begins to **fade** and Mt Townsend has **disappeared** below the horizon

At the bottom of the valley there is a **little creek**

that a few kms later becomes part of the **Snowy River**—do you cross it or not?

As you start to climb again, you **can't see your long term goal**

but the rocks on the **saddle by Muller's Pass** are still visible

Then they too disappear **below the horizon**—but you are on course

Then you **emerge** from the valley, and there is Mt Townsend again!

Sometimes life is a bit like that—it's difficult to see where you are going

1) Paul talks about his life as pressing on towards a goal

He says, “this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Sometimes life takes us through a **valley** where we can't see where we are going

For many, life has been like that **this year**

sometimes **other years** have been like that too

Life can be a struggle as we **wrestle with ourselves** and the world

We get **depressed**. Things go wrong. Plans fail. Life is unfair.

We **despair** and wonder if things will ever get better

—maybe this is the **new normal**

Even the **good times** can see us get off track and make us lose sight of the goal

As the **Roman philosopher Juvenal** said, “Luxury is more ruthless than war”

When things are going well we can forget **where we are heading**

We get **very busy** with many things that in themselves are good

We might even describe a lot of them as ‘**good deeds**’

But **they can still** get us off track

2) So how does Paul keep his life on track?

He has a simple approach: **Garbage out! God in!**

Paul's **list of garbage is impressive**: Everything he once valued.

And all the **good things** he has ever done.

He would have made a **good Lutheran!**

Great **pedigree**. Baptised as an infant. In church every Sunday.

Served in many different ways in the congregation.

Self-sacrificial with his **offerings** as well as his time. A zealous **witness**.

In fact if anyone was ever going to get into heaven by doing **good things**

then surely Paul would **be the one**

He even says that “as to righteousness under the law” he was **blameless**

He kept all the **rules**—a good solid citizen and churchman

They are **all good things**, but as soon as we put our trust in them

they become **deadly poison**

It is important to understand that these are **normally good things not sins**

But Paul describes them as

“having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law.”

Nothing we do can **make God love us** more or less

or make our **salvation** any more sure

In fact if we trust these things our salvation becomes very **shaky** indeed

3) So why is it important to take the garbage out?

Because otherwise there **isn't much room** left for God to come in!

It is a **subtle** thing and the Holy Spirit destroys our self-righteousness

He has **many ways** of doing this

He allows us to experience **disappointment and failure**

He **convicts** us of our sin and we feel **guilty**

We experience **injustice** and feel powerless to do anything about it

These are **great gifts** because they refocus us on what matters

If we **receive** them as gifts, they direct our attention away from ourselves and **to God** and what he has done for us

They remind us that we are **not in control**

They **remind us** that ultimately the things we often value are garbage

We can **enjoy** them, and should do so, because they too are gifts of God

But we **mustn't put our trust** in the garbage. **The garbage is thrown out!**

4) Paul contrasts our own so-called righteousness with God's promise and gift

He says he does not have, "a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith."

Paul is righteous—right with God—because God gives it through faith

faith is itself a **gift**—the work of the Holy Spirit in us—that trusts the promises not what I have done but what **Jesus has done** for me

in his **death and resurrection**—FOR ME! **God has come in!**

5) Because Paul knows this, he has an attitude and approach that shapes his life

He says, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead."

Do you see how this **flows on** from what has gone before?

Because **he has** this righteousness, therefore he presses on towards the goal

In faith, **he knows** the goal is there—even if he can't see it clearly at the time

because Paul also **went through some valleys** that were deep

6) Paul knows he is still on a journey and that he hasn't arrived yet

He says, "Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ... this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus."

The **end is sure**—that is not in doubt—but there is still a life to be lived.

Conc) We too have been on a journey—individually and together

There is the **COVID** pandemic and the twists and turns of our individual lives

We **don't know** what the future holds

But **we do know** who we are and where we are going

We are **God's forgiven children** for Jesus' sake

At times

the journey may become so **tough** that we can't see the **next steps**

sometimes we don't even seem to be able to **pray**

and all we have is the **promises** of God

so we **cling** to these, in spite of what we **see and feel**

Like being **down in the depths** of a valley and no longer being able to see Mt Townsend

we **keep going** because it doesn't depend on our garbage—that has been thrown out

and **God has come in**

so we simply **hang on** to his promises

even when **nothing makes sense** to us

and we feel nothing but **confusion**

We trust God's promises in **whatever faith we have** been given

because **it all depends on God** and he can be trusted

Always!

Amen.



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