

1 Welcome

It is a great privilege to lead you in a time of worship and reflection on Scripture as we manage our path through Covid-19 lockdown.

Please find a comfortable place to sit where you will not be disturbed. In addition to your Bible, you will find it helpful to have a notebook or diary to record a thought or something God is saying to you. It is my prayer that you will hear the voice of God speaking to you to bring guidance and encouragement in this time of fear and stress.

2 Call to worship

Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles (Matthew 15:17&18).

Our call to worship is taken from the Gospel reading for today. It is Jesus' response to the religious leaders who had travelled all the way from Jerusalem to Phoenicia to engage Him in the matter of religious ritual.

3 Prayer

Our prayer is taken from Psalm 91:

¹You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,

²will say to the Lord, My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.'

³ For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence;

⁴ he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

⁵You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day,

⁶or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

⁷A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

⁸You will only look with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

⁹Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your dwelling-place,

¹⁰no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.

4 Scripture passages

Isaiah 56:1-8 God's people will include all nations

Matthew 15:10-28 Things that defile

5 How to please God?

1. "What must I do to please God," is a question that has persistently demanded attention from human beings. We know that we must obey God. However, what are the specific actions that will demonstrate our obedience? In the Garden of Eden, God anticipated this need and made a very simple and unambiguous statement,

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

Sadly, this prohibition was not sufficient to satisfy Adam and Eve and they consciously disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:6-13). Through their disobedience sin entered our world (Romans 5:12) and death became the lot of humanity.

2. However, the question remains, “What, specifically, must I do to please God?” With the passage of time and the emergence of new communities all over the world, many different answers have been proposed. God saw this great need for an understanding of His requirements and sent the Lord Jesus to earth to give guidance and strength to struggling humanity.
3. Jesus, God the Son, came to Earth in the Jewish community in Israel and engaged with people, in all walks of life, in an attempt get them to understand God’s expectations of obedience.
4. Orthodox Jews had developed a very comprehensive system of rules governing all human behaviour referred to as the *Torah* or *Law* – the first 5 books of the Bible. They believed that strict adherence to *Torah*, would ensure that their lives were acceptable to God. Sadly, even the most orthodox Jews, struggled to obey *Torah* and found ways to satisfy their deviant spirits (see Matthew 15:3-9).
5. In response to a question from the religious leaders (Scribes and Pharisees) in Israel, Jesus gave a very simple benchmark that could be understood by people all over the world,

Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. (Matthew 15:17&18)

Jesus is saying that the motivation for our behaviour is what is most important. What emanates from our heart – the source of our motivation – is the decisive consideration. **We** sin through what **we** do. Somebody else cannot contaminate us with their sin!
6. Solomon, in his wisdom advised,

My child, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways. (Proverbs 23:26)

6 Reflection

1. We pause to reflect on what God has said to us in the scripture readings:
 - (a) *Who holds the keys to my heart?*
Simply stated, *Is it my desire to obey God in all that I do and say?*
 - (b) God never intended that obedience to him would be a burden. It was Jesus who advised,

²⁸*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.*
²⁹*Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ³⁰*For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)*
2. Write down a prayer in your note book which express your need and your confidence that God will give you the grace to obey him. Read the prayer aloud to God.

7 Prayer of intercession

1. Write down 4 or 5 people who you would like to bring to God. State what you would like God to do for them.
2. Pray for our believing community in Bela-Bela
3. Pray for our country in this time of such great medical and financial need

8 Benediction

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us, now and evermore