

- Psalm 100; Colossians 3:12-17. Rev. Bruce Stanley
Sermon audio and text available at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

Thanks Giving Sunday. December 9th 2012

This is an exciting day. It's a day to give thanks to God for all he's doing. A day to all come together to worship God as one congregation. A day to celebrate. A day to give financially for the work that's happening. A day of commitment.

We're giving thanks today to God for yet another amazing year. We're giving thanks that he has given us so much. And we're giving thanks for the many opportunities that are ahead of us. There are lots of ministries that will resume when we move back on site. And there are many new ministries that we will be able to begin. And I'm excited that so many people are prepared to serve in so many areas.

I'm excited to see the building work progress and get closer to finishing. I'm excited to stand in the air conditioning of the new church. I'm excited to see disabled access to every part of the new building. I'm excited to see people there during the week and on Saturdays doing so much work when our lives are all so busy.

The question we all had, which is now being answered, is “What will it look like” What will the new building look like? What will the chairs look like? What will the new logo look like? The new website? The hall? The carpet? The kitchen? The toilets? The paint colours?
And now, nearly all of those questions have been answered. Except this one:

What will our church look like?

Because we all know that our church is not that building down the road. THIS is our church – the people right here. The people we worship with each week. The people who gather together as a community. This is my questions – as we give thanks to God for all he's doing, what do WE look like?

III – If you dare to go shopping at the moment, around Christmas, you’ll notice that nearly every store has started their window dressing for Christmas. Decorations, special displays, even nativities, Christmas trees. All decorated to look attractive. And it’s all in order to do one thing: To encourage you to spend money! Their aim is to lure us into their attractive shop and spend money.

As a church, what are we attracting people to? What will make our church attractive? What sort of community are we inviting people into? What do we want to “look like” as a community? We don’t want people to spend money, we want them to commit their lives to Jesus! Colossians 3:12 –

12Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

13Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

What we look like is about WHO we are. BECAUSE we are God’s chosen people, BECAUSE we are holy and dearly loved, then we are to clothe ourselves, as a community, with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. And to bear with each other, forgiving each other any grievances we may be holding.

You see, THAT is an attractive church. THAT is an attractive community? Why? Because it’s unique! It’s different to the world. We don’t hold grudges. We forgive! We don’t get impatient, or proud, or arrogant.

Imagine people coming into our church and experiencing that! Imagine when they step into these beautiful new facilities, that they’re not saying: “Wow it’s a nice building”, but that they’re STILL saying: “Wow, they’re nice people there, I was welcomed well, people were friendly, and they really care for each other.” What a great witness that would be! A community of grace and forgiveness. A community where we’re distinguished NOT by the features of our new facilities, but by the content of our hearts.

Verse 14: **14**And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Love binds all these things together. It’s LOVE that gives us patience and humility. It’s love that drives us to forgive and let go of grudges against

others. And it's not just some ordinary kind of love. It's the love of Christ that is IN us. And that love binds us together in perfect unity.

III – We don't want to do worship like we do our washing. When you stick your clothes in the washing machine, you're supposed to, apparently, separate the colours. Darks, lights, etc, etc. And the idea is that when you do that, the colours don't bleed across to the other clothes. So you don't get a red shirt bleeding over onto a white shirt. Which I have done. Once. It wasn't my white shirt. And it's now pink.

But we don't do worship like that. Because in worshipping God as a community, we have unity through Jesus. We WANT to all bleed across into each other's lives. We want to be a community, through love, that is united as one body.

And verse 15 – we want the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts since as members of one body, we were called to peace. One body. One peace. One Lord. One church.

This is what we want to look like as a church. Today, as we come together, we might think about how nice this is to all meet together, in unity. But unity isn't about coming together as one church service. Although it is really nice to do that! Unity is about our heart, and our character. Unity is about worshipping the same ONE Lord Jesus. And it's about having the same mission – to be disciples and make disciples. It's about inviting people in, with the hope that they may come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour and be saved.

And this is WHY we can be so thankful. Not just because we have a new building. Not just because we have a great community. Not just because we have so many opportunities for ministry. But primarily because we have been called together as members of one body – the body of Christ.

So how do we express that thankfulness? Two ways:

1. Verse 16: **16**Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

We express our thankfulness by letting Christ's message dwell among us. By coming to God's word, together, to teach one another, encourage one another, to sing together with songs that express God's Word in the Bible. This is how we express thankfulness. By being a community who lives and breathes the words of God. That is something to be thankful for, isn't it? That our body is being built on God's Word.

2. verse 17: **17**And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

This is the second way to be thankful. To do everything for him. To do everything in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to God. Everything. Everything we do, and every word we speak – all in the name of Jesus, with thanks to God. What does that mean? It means that the best way to thank God is to live our whole life for him. Not a couple of hours a day or week, but our whole life. With your family, on your own, with friends, at work, at the shops, wherever we are – we thank God by being clothed, at all times, with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, clothed with the forgiveness and peace and love of Jesus.

When we show that character in our lives, we are saying “thank you God”. Thank you for YOUR kindness, YOUR patience, YOUR forgiveness, YOUR peace and love.

As we give thanks today, let THAT be our commitment, above all else. That our character would be the same as that of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, so that ANYONE who walks into this church, wherever we meet, may see the very character of Jesus in our lives, and turn, and be saved.

Let's pray:

Thank you Father for your patience and gentleness and humility and kindness to us. Thank you for your peace and forgiveness and love. Help us to have your heart, your character, that each day, by living as your people, clothed with your character, we may be a church that shows the people of our community who YOU are. May we live for your glory and point people towards the forgiveness, peace and love that you offer. For your honour. Amen.