

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO US THROUGH COVID-19? (LUKE 13:1-9)

(As we have endured a challenging year, we may be wondering where God has been through all of this? What is God trying to teach us/me? Bob Pryor was due to lead us through these questions this Sunday (10/1/21), and I am grateful he has provided us with the following reflection. Ian.)

Pray: Lord, in your sovereign will You work all things together for the good of those who love You. Father, as I read Your Word, open my eyes to the way You are working in these present times. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Read: Luke 13:1 – 9

Reflect: It is not uncommon in the media to hear the question: *what are we learning through the pandemic?* At the end of Luke 12 Jesus criticises his hearers for not being able “to interpret this present age”. In Chapter 13:1 – 5, He then goes on to discuss two tragedies: one involving a political slaughter and the other a construction accident. In both cases significant numbers of people died.

Note how Jesus considers these events in ways that would astonish most of us:

- He does not try to explain why they occurred
- He does not consider that those who died did not deserve their fate
- He does not insist that those who died were being singled out for special punishment
- He does not consider that somehow God's goodness or control has suddenly come into question and immediately require some sort of justification
- Human evil and natural disasters are viewed as signs that something is drastically wrong with our world and with ourselves.

In effect, Jesus is saying: “See what sin is like, see what it does, look at its consequences and do not think that any of you can escape them. Therefore, repent, turn back, come to me, seek forgiveness and mercy, enter My kingdom.”

In verses 6 to 9 Jesus tells a parable of an unfruitful fig tree intended to be uprooted but which is given a reprieve for a further year by the intercession of a man who promises to care for the tree in effort encourage its fruitfulness. **In this context, the point being that God's delay of judgement for all of us is also his gracious opportunity for repentance.**

SOME COMFORTS & CHALLENGES FOR US IN COVID-19

- Jesus is calling for you in this time of crisis
- God's delay is never the coldness of indifference, but His opportunity to demonstrate grace
- The imminence of judgement is the constant incentive for our witness to God's mercy and forgiveness to those who have not yet turned to Jesus
- Let us make sure we refuse to use “obeying the government” (eg lockdown) as an excuse for not doing anything constructive in the service of God.
- Consider how, despite imposed restrictions, we can selflessly and sacrificially show the love and grace of Jesus to others in these times when they may need them most.

Bob Pryor



Belrose Uniting Church

in the Assembly of Confessing Congregations
of the Uniting Church in Australia

Corner Forest Way and Morgan Road, Belrose

We aim TO KNOW CHRIST AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN

GOOD NEWSWEEK

Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world since 1916.

10th January 2021



**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!** 2 Cor 5:17

Sunday Services will resume next Sunday 17th January 2021 at 9.30 am and 5.30 pm

When you come to Church next Sunday 17th, please:

- * Wear a mask
- * Bring your phone to scan the NSW Health QR Code to register your attendance
- OR make sure you register manually with Anne Weeks
- * Use the hand sanitizer
- * Observe physical distancing

Pastor: Rev Ian Weeks
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Wednesday – Monday (Tuesday off)

Church Website: <http://www.belrose.unitingchurch.org.au>
Prayer Requests: prayer.team@belrose.unitingchurch.org.au

**Normal Sunday
Services**
9:30am & 5.30pm



Good Newsweek is the weekly news sheet of BUC. Contributions to *Newsweek* are very welcome and should be emailed to mail@belrose.unitingchurch.org.au by **12 noon Thursdays** or given to Rev. Ian.

Next Sunday 17th January 2020

9.30 am Morning Church

Theme: **2021 Resolution: "This year, I won't be religious!"**

Bible Reading: 2 Peter 1:1 – 15

Next Sunday we will be celebrating with the extended Piukala Family in the Baptism of baby Paula (Paul).

The family invite you to stay after the service for morning tea.

Service Leader: Ian Weeks

Music: Allan Leslie

Welcoming: Venessa C & Allison P

Morning Tea: Piukala Family

Preacher: Ian Weeks

Reader: Helen Meillon

Flowers: Jan McGuire

5.30 pm Evening Church

Service Leader: Ian Weeks

Preacher: Ian Weeks

WHAT'S ON @ BUC – Update your 2021 diaries

Property/room bookings to Denis Wall: deniswall30@gmail.com

Using the Church premises? Don't forget to turn off lights & lock doors.

Thurs 21st Jan	Congregation Prayer meeting resumes	7.30 pm
Thurs 28th Jan	Congregation Prayer meeting	11.00 am

Good News Quarterly will be coming out again in late January. Get your articles to Editor Venessa: venessac@tpg.com.au

January Mission of the Month:

*Sydney Central Coast Presbytery Levy:
A Catalyst for Growing Generous, Inclusive, and
Courageous Churches*

The Presbytery is the regional council of the UCA which has the responsibility for the pastoral care of the Congregations and Ministers within its bounds, and to facilitate mission and ministry.

The Sydney Central Coast Presbytery extends from north of Sydney Harbour, out to Beecroft, Ryde, and Cherrybrook, and up to the northern end of the Central Coast.

Through our Presbytery Levy we seek to encourage other Congregations in ministry within our Presbytery.



People, Participation and Prayer: a church isn't a building of brick and wood. It's a group of people gathered by God who are building their lives around Jesus. That's why belonging to church means more than just Sunday services. In this **Newsweek** are some of the things we are doing, events and activities we think are worthwhile, and people and things to pray for. Pray regularly for our Church family.

Our Congregation prayer gatherings are held weekly – alternating Thursdays at 11.00 am & 7.30 pm – **The next Prayer Meeting will be on Thursday 21st Jan at 7.30 pm.**

James 5:16

Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Healing, Strength & Comfort for:

- * Those recovering from surgery or illnesses: Gordon Allan; Denis Wall; Diana Amos
- * Those grieving the loss of loved ones: Charles Cox & Family; Heather Broadbent & Family; Family of Rev Bob Coleman
- * Those who are struggling with Covid-19 lockdown restriction; disappointment over holiday plans, and missing contact with family and friends

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- * The war against Covid19
- * Refreshing and healthy holidays
- * Evangelistic opportunities to share the Gospel
- * Our Church leaders as we prepare for new things in 2021

Have a prayer request? *Email: prayer.team@belrose.unitingchurch.org.au
*Give to Rev. Ian or *Place a note in the prayer box near Church front door.



As I move through this New Year,

I pray that I will always be thankful to God for:

- * each new day to serve the Lord & others
- * all those who serve me with dedication and sacrifice.

YESTERDAY IS HISTORY,
TOMORROW IS A MYSTERY
BUT TODAY IS A GIFT.
THAT'S WHY WE CALL IT
THE PRESENT.

