

# **PARISH STUDY RESOURCE**

## **September 2018**

*Weekly resources can be download at [www.stpetersbribie.org.au](http://www.stpetersbribie.org.au)*



Harold stares at people he thinks the sermon is pertinent to.

*This resource has been created for use in the Anglican Church  
Bribie Island for the use of individuals and parish groups.*

**Anglican**  
Church  
St Peter's Bribie Island

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# **STUDY – 2 SEPTEMBER 2018**

*22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time*

Song of Songs 2.8-13

Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9

James 1.17-27

Mark 7.1-8, 14-23



Open with a time of prayer, which could include the following ...

*As people of faith we are called to journey towards better ways of living. Lord help us to support and encourage one another as we travel together and make us wise and willing to hear from you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Reflection – Song of Solomon 2.8-13

The erotic love that opens the hearts and minds of the man and the woman in today's passage from the Song of Solomon does not stop with their openness to one another. It also opens them to the hearts and minds of other people. Discovering their solidarity with one another, they discover their solidarity with all other human beings as well. Whether the Song is read as a love story between two people or as an allegory about God's love for all creation, its beauty is that it invites all humankind to play as if life and love depended upon it (as they do).

Question

1. If love is transforming, why do you think that so many relationships are problematic and dysfunctional?

Reflection – James 1.17-27

James says that those who hear the word of God but do not live their faith out in their words and actions are deceiving themselves. Like a person who looks into a mirror and then goes away unmindful of their faith. What is this deception about? On a practical level, someone might say, "I really believe in Jesus; I really believe in the resurrection," but

then give no evidence of such faith in dealing with his or her neighbour (2.18-19).

### Questions

2. What do the words you speak, and the things you do, say about your faith?
3. Do actions always speak louder than words?

### Reflection – Mark 7.1-23

Jesus uses the word “heart” three times in 7.1-23, and with each reference we sense the importance of the human heart for religious faith and practice. Since the heart was thought to be the centre of one’s will and decision-making abilities, to turn one’s heart away from God (7.6) or to have it filled with evil intentions (7.21) was a grievous sin. Passages such as 3.5; 6.52; and 8.17 also remind us that hardness of heart is among the most damning of spiritual conditions, revealing a lack of compassion toward others. In these and other verses, Jesus urges us to examine our own defiled hearts rather than our neighbours’ dirty hands. Our task is not to judge and condemn others for what they do, but to set before them the example of an alternative way of life, based not on complacency and a false sense of our own superiority, but on inner purity and outward compassion. Jesus’ main point is perfectly clear: what really renders a person “unclean” in God’s sight is what comes out of him or her. It is not what we eat but what we do that really counts with God.

### Questions

4. Do we spend too much time looking at and judging others?
5. Do you practise what you preach?
6. How do our own religious traditions bring God’s love and justice to the world?

Close with a time of prayer - *consider praying for a group of people who are wrongly judged in our society.*

Closing Prayer

*We go, with the word of God in our hearts,  
praying that we will embody it in our lives,  
and be true witnesses to our great hope.*

*Help us, Holy Spirit, to keep in step with you  
and grow more like Jesus every day. Amen.*

# **STUDY – 9 SEPTEMBER 2018**

*23th Sunday of Ordinary Time*

Proverbs 22.1-2, 8-9, 22-23

Psalm 125

James 2.1-10, 14-17

Mark 7.24-37



Open with a time of prayer, which could include the following ...

*O God, as we gather, may we never place our own needs above those of the other, seeking our own comfort rather than consoling those in need. We come together today, to celebrate the value you have given to all of us. Hold us in your love, as we gather, O God. Amen.*

## Opening Question

1. Have you ever gone hungry?

## Reflection – Proverbs 22

The Proverbs passage for today offers wisdom on matters of relationships, generosity, and justice. The passage reminds the gathered community of the significance of seeing, understanding, and relating to the poor. Verse 2 says “The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all.” In God there are no distinctions. So if God sees and desires no distinction, why is there such a growing divide between those that have and those that have not in our own society. If you would like to reflect on this further I recommend watching the SBS show INSIGHT (Season 2018 Episode 22 - Hungry), you can search for it on SBS on Demand or you can use the link below. It is great to see so many in our community support the Pantry for the Neighbourhood Centre, there are much or more people in our community going hungry because the increasing cost associated with living.

Link for INSIGHT (Season 2018 Episode 22 - Hungry

[www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/video/1264410691863/insight-hungry](http://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/video/1264410691863/insight-hungry)

## Question

2. How should the church be responding the needs of the poor in our community?

*A good name*  
is rather to be  
chosen than  
*great riches,*  
and *loving* favour rather  
than  
*silver and gold.*  
PROVERBS 22: 1

## Reflection – James 2.1-17

James' challenge is radical in that he calls all Christians, rich and poor, to show no partiality. He calls us to merge our differing self-understandings into a new, enlarged, and richer unity of identity as faithful followers of Jesus. The text speaks not only to the profound issue of acceptance but potentially to the inclusion of the uncool. New people, whatever their social rank, need to be stitched into the social fabric of the church, not merely formally received as new members.

## Questions

3. Do we really treat people equally in the church?
4. Where are the lines drawn in your community when it comes to accepting and treating people as equals?

## Reflection – Mark 7.24-37

Jesus' ministry affirms and anticipates the church's need to share God's gifts of grace, peace, and healing with all people. The persons who are healed do not approach Jesus alone but are aided by others. The young girl is freed of demon possession because her mother pleads on her behalf. The deaf man is brought to Jesus by friends who beg for his healing. In these stories it is not the faith of the disabled persons that brings about their healing but the active faith of their companions. Their stories remind us to approach Jesus on behalf of others and actively seek the well-being of those who need help and care.

## Question

5. The story from this week's Gospel is troubling in many ways. How do we reconcile Jesus' response to the woman with our belief in a God who loves all equally?
6. Most of us are reluctant to share our faith with others and we find very good reasons to keep quiet: we may believe that our actions speak more loudly than our words, we may be afraid of the inadequacy of our speech, or we may fear that we will make a mistake and alienate those to whom we are speaking. How do you need to speak up, so that others may receive healing?

Close with a time of prayer - *consider praying for the disadvantaged in society and for those who are in need of healing.*

## Closing Prayer

*Living Saviour, lead us and guide us.*

*Help us in our lives this week*

*to reflect our faith to all we meet.*

*In your name we pray,*

*and in your name we go. Amen.*

# **STUDY – 16 SEPTEMBER 2018**

*24<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time*

Proverbs 1.20-33

Psalm 19

James 2.18-26

Mark 8.27-38



Open with a time of prayer, which could include the following ...

Gather us, O God, from all our disparate places.

Gather us, O God, and shine your light among us.

Gather us, O God, and may our hearts and mouths speak of your glory. Amen.

## Opening Question

1. What does it mean to be wise?

## Reflection – Proverbs 1.20-33

Wisdom demands attention in the streets, in the squares, at the busiest corner, at the entrance of the city gate. These are the sites of communal life, of the bustling relationships of daily life. This is where wisdom demands to be heard, not in the privacy of homes, the sacredness of the temple, or even the quiet recesses of souls. Wisdom calls for allegiance smack in the thick of work and play, at busy intersections where people gather, and at the city gates, where legal and commercial deals take place. Ordinary life with its drama and busy social exchanges, with its joys and disappointments, is wisdom's domain. In this passage and in the wisdom literature in general, mundane human life is the hallowed place, the sacred ground where one may encounter wisdom herself, if one is attentive. Whether or not wisdom is God in this text, she reveals herself like God, makes demands like God, and promises freedom and life to her followers like God. Whoever she is, her appearance destabilises complacency, closed-heartedness, and death-dealing behaviour that comes from

ignorance, hatred of knowledge, and refusal to commit to the way of wisdom. Wisdom invites everyone to a life of harmonious balance in the midst of daily life.

Fear of the Lord does not mean snivelling terror before God. The phrase is an ancient code for the proper behaviour of the religious person in relation to God and creation. It involves awe, respect, and obedience; it summarizes righteous living. People who fear the Lord have their feet planted on the ground, see around them truthfully, and live in harmony with God and world.

### Question

2. Think of a time when insensitivity has jarred you into an appropriate action. Share it with the group.

### Reflection – James 2:18-26

In the writings of St Paul, we are taught that it is through faith alone we can find salvation. While in this passage from James it says “that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” Rather than these teachings conflicting with each other, James is teaching about the need for authentic faith. This passage reminds us that even the demons have faith in Jesus. James teaches that we can examine how authentic our faith is by examining how we live out our faith. If our faith has no works, then do we really have faith that St Paul teaches. Faith is not just a proclamation of words, or a concept in our head, faith is way of life. Faith means being doers of the word, and not merely hearers the word, for those who hear without doing, deceive themselves.

### Question

3. Do you judge your faith by what you believe or by what you do?

## Reflection – Mark 8:27-38

As modern-day readers we are not shocked by Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah or Jesus' description of the true meaning of being the Messiah, but in their day, these were shocking statements. Peter is right to declare that Jesus is Messiah, but wrong to project on to him his own distorted (though conventional) ideas about what Messiahship might mean. Jesus' vocation will stand conventional wisdom on its head. The way of the cross is the true, though shocking, reflection of God's thoughts. Peter must learn to renounce conventional, skin-saving folly and to walk the steep path of subversive wisdom. The domestication of Jesus as the Messiah makes it hard to renew the shock of Peter's declaration and Jesus' teaching about the nature of the Messiah and the meaning of discipleship. "Picking up one's cross" is not accepting just any burden, but rather being prepared to put one's life on the line for the sake of Jesus and the gospel. The disciples are indeed called to be prepared to share in the fate of the one they follow, and to recognize that it is there that true life is found.

## Questions

4. Who do you say Jesus is?
5. Many of the disciples did indeed follow in the footsteps of Jesus, dying as martyrs for the faith. What are you willing to sacrifice as a follower of Jesus?

Close with a time of prayer - *consider praying for each member in the group as we all strive to live as faithful disciples of Jesus.*

## Closing Prayer

*God, may we go with your praise on our lips,  
and your love in our hearts.*

*May we be prepared to give our whole lives to you,  
whatever that means, wherever it leads.*

*Help us to follow you, Jesus. Amen.*

# **STUDY – 23 SEPTEMBER 2018**

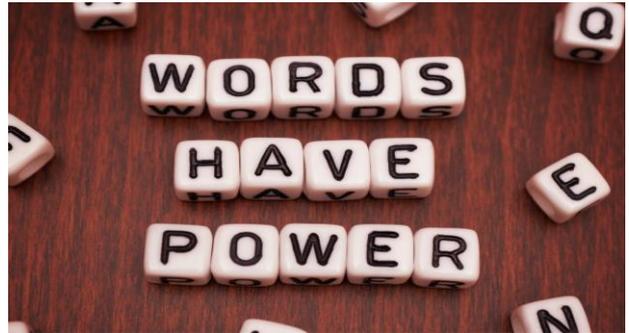
25<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

Proverbs 31.10-31

Psalm 1

James 3.1-12

Mark 9.30-37



Open with a time of prayer, which could include the following ...

*We gather together in this place, one family,  
with all our differences,  
all our hopes,  
and all our disappointments.*

*We come in trust to the Lord, our God,  
knowing that we are loved by God,  
and by one another.*

*Holy Spirit, you are welcome here. Amen.*

## Opening Question

1. Do you consider yourself a person of wisdom?

## Reflection – Proverbs 31.10-31

This passage portrays a marriage that is neither egalitarian nor inegalitarian. This is because it is not interested in comparing husband and wife to one another. Comparison, whether of equals or of unequals, implies a kind of opposition; but what characterises the relationship here is mutual support. Generous and empowering, it flows from each to the other and overflows into blessings on the family, the marketplace, and the whole city. Because wisdom has provided for the needs of all, no tragedy can disturb the equanimity of her family. She speaks wisely and persistently “looks well to the ways of her household” (v. 27). Rather than the woman praising her family, her family praises her, thus reversing gender expectations of the

ancient world. She surpasses other women because she embodies the right attitude at the heart of religion.

### Question

2. When you read this passage from Proverbs, what is your first reaction to the relationship portrayed?

### Reflection – James 3.1-12

What makes language so powerful? Or, to use James's phraseology, what makes it possible for a member of the body as small as the tongue to boast of such great exploits? James lays out two reasons for its power. First, language acts as a kind of representational catalyst: it is a small and even fleeting thing that makes big things possible. Second, language can be a wild thing (wilder, even, than any animal species): it does great good and great harm. Perhaps becoming wise means, at least in part, learning how to use language in ways that are both increasingly playful and increasingly pure, both admitting our many mistakes and resisting the many temptations to make them.

### Question

3. During your life what words have been spoken to you that you will never forget?
4. It is said that the most frequent reason given by those who steer clear of churches is the duplicity of Christians. Do you think that the words of the church accurately reflect the teachings of Jesus?

### Reflection – Mark 9.30-37

This is one of many Gospel texts that show that leadership and authority among the Christian community is based upon service and humility. In teaching about service Jesus uses the illustration of a child, whoever welcomes one such child welcomes me. I think we have lost the meaning of this illustration. We now live in a culture where children are cherished and valued, but in Jesus day children lacked status. I would tend to say that those we are called to serve are the forgotten of our society, those without any social status.

## Questions

5. This passage commences with Jesus teaching his disciples, if Jesus came to church this Sunday, what would be the first thing he would want to teach us?
6. In our culture, where children are cherished and valued, who are the ones without social status we care called to serve?

Close with a time of prayer - *consider identifying and praying the lack social status in the community.*

## Closing Prayer

*Go – and know the Lord in your lives!*

*Go – and reflect his love to the world!*

*Go – and keep your eyes fixed on what is important.*

*Go – knowing that God's spirit is with you, today and always. Amen.*

# **STUDY – 30 SEPTEMBER 2018**

*26<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time*

*Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9.20-22*

*Psalm 124*

*James 5:12-20*

*Mark 9:38-50*



Open with a time of prayer, which could include the following ...

*We gather in love of the one we seek and serve,  
declaring his name as one of power and significance.*

*We gather in hope, knowing he holds all our futures. Amen.*

## Opening Question

1. What place does prayer have in your daily life?

## Reflection – Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9.20-22

Esther is only one of two books in the Bible that does not directly refer to God. Though God's presence may be deduced from the loyalty, goodness, and triumph of the weak. It may be surmised from the reversals of fortune where the good triumph over the wicked, despite all expectation to the contrary. And God's presence is suggested by the liturgical feast of Purim, where food is shared, community strengthened, and the poor invited to the table. For Christians, the feast of Purim calls to mind eucharistic feasts and, in the context of Esther, serves as strong warning against social systems that benefit the powerful and harm others. While not mentioned, God appears present and active in the life of Esther. Many of the women mentioned in the Bible have powerful and transformative journeys, consider women such as Hannah and Mary the mother of Jesus. In the prayers of Hannah in the Hebrew Scriptures and Mary in Christian Scriptures the belief is expressed that God is in the business of lifting up the oppressed and bringing down the oppressor. As she prepares to leave her young son in the care of Eli the priest, Hannah prays, "The

Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts up the needy from the ash heap” (1 Samuel 2.7-8). As she anticipates the birth of Jesus, Mary prays, “He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty” (Luke 1.52-53). Certainly these prayers tell us that if we are looking for evidence of God’s presence, we do well to consider those times and places when there are great reversals and dramatic changes of fortune.

### Question

2. Who are some present-day women in whom you recognise God as present and active?

### Reflection – James 5.12-20

The passage from James compels us to be a people of prayer, praying in all situations. Both those who suffer and those who are cheerful are encouraged to pray (songs of praise being a form of prayer) makes sense only if prayer can effect change, and prayer can effect change only if God hears and responds to prayer. But, it is not just for ourselves that we pray. We pray for others that we know personally who are in need and those whose needs are known to us in the wider world. This allows us to see the image of God embodied in others, to share in their suffering, and to add our voice in God’s hearing for the good of the world. We can do this on our own, but the power of prayer is seen most clearly in the praying community of the church as these concerns are voiced aloud in worship and other gatherings of God’s people.

### Question

3. Do you find it easier to pray in the good times or the hard times?
4. Which hymns/songs are your favourites; and which ones strengthen your spirit in times of stress and sorrow?

## Reflection – Mark 9.38-50

There is a constant tension between being inclusive and being exclusive, with serious questions to be faced. How far should a community go in relating to other people who are different, and how far should it go in excluding those who have different standards and values and customs? How far must a community go in isolating itself from outsiders to keep its values? How does a community keep its identity if it recognizes the validity of differing ways and structures of other communities? How do people in a community fellowship with others without losing their defining distinctiveness?

Ponder the questions in today's reflection from Mark regarding community.

## Question

5. What have you learned from Jesus about being at peace with others, especially those who set us on edge?

Close with a time of prayer - *consider praying for each member in the group.*

## Closing Prayer

*Lord, send us out in your name,  
equipping us to follow your call upon our lives.  
May we know you with us, going before us,  
every step of the way.  
Jesus, go with us, and lead us, we pray. Amen.*