

he chooses to act no other way.

And in Jesus, we too can live and love true to ourselves, as the Father's loved children in whom he delights. We too can act the same way. For without this love, life can't be all that God poured his soul into. With Jesus, what a wonderful life we have to discover together.

What's shaping your priorities this week?

Let us pray.

Jesus, help us to always see life through your eyes so that we can prioritise our lives in harmony with you.

Thank you for revealing to us that as we put your love into action, meeting the needs of the overlooked or ignored we have the wonderful privilege of loving you. Save us from the false grandeur of this world, that we might invest ourselves in your kingdom. Amen.

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## Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am  
Pastor: Tim 0427326553



Reaching Out with the Love of Jesus that All my Know, Worship & Grow in Christ

20 November 2011

## HOW DO WE PRIORITIES? - 1

Matthew 25:31-46



Today as we get ready to see the old church year out and the new church year in I thought it would be a good idea to look at the theme of 'How do we Prioritise?' How do we work out what is important and needs to be done and what can wait? How do we work out what is valuable and what isn't? How do we set our priorities in life?

The church calendar gave me a big hint; it starts and finishes with Jesus. We finish looking forward to Jesus return, and we start with Jesus birth. The church calendar focuses on Jesus.

So, until recently, we measured years; BC, before Christ and AD, in the year of our Lord. Jesus was at the centre. Interestingly we now have a move to replace

these terms with 'Common Era' and 'Before Common Era'. Which is a none too subtle way to remove Jesus from the centre of our History.

Today I'm reminded that it is Jesus who shapes my life, my history and my priorities. I was reminded of that by the reading from Ephesians; "And God placed all things under Jesus' feet and appointed him head over everything for the church." (Eph. 1:22)

That phrase; 'for the church' always smacks me in the face with a wakeup call. Too often I live unthinkingly as if work and the society in which I live is what is important. I've got bills to pay, children to educate, a healthy appetite. I get

consumed by work, by society and all that goes on as if this is what life is all about. And I go to church so God can give me the strength to carry out all these tasks. I get into the habit of seeing church as part of life; as part of society, something I do to keep me energised for life.

When I read this verse Paul snaps me out of my dream-time; church is what is important. Living life with God the Father, in Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, that's what life is all about. This Jesus seeks to fill me, so that he fills everything I do, everything we do together with him.

First Corinthians 13 powerfully reminds me also that life is not about work, success, productivity but about Jesus. Paul writes; "If I

have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains ... doesn't all this sound impressive even right ... but do not have love, I am nothing." (1 Cor. 13:2) I am nothing! That strikes right to the heart.

church, you see is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence." (Eph. 1:22,23) WOW!!!

I must confess I don't always wake up and

reading unsettling. We have a group of people who made poor decisions based on the wrong priorities. They ignored the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoner. Why might they have ignored these people? They had needs themselves. They were busy. They didn't

deserve to be helped. They deserved what they got. Why did they ignore these people, the weak?

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**...but do not have love, I am nothing.**

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To be successful and to leave Jesus out of life comes to nothing. The word for love used by Paul speaks of God's love, which in Jesus he has chosen to lavish on us, so that we could become living expressions of his love, of his very personality. Anything less sadly misses the mark, no matter how well I do it.

face each day with this perspective. And so my priorities will be affected by my daily perspective.

What can wait; a crying child or my favourite program? What can wait; making money or sharing Jesus? What can wait; building my career or building Jesus' kingdom? What can wait? What takes priority?

In the parable the King says; "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." (Matt. 25:45)

Did you notice we come back to the King, who is the Jesus figure in the parable? You didn't do it to me; the king. The king is Jesus, whom we have the wonderful opportunity of loving as was we are loved by him.

I love the way Paul's letter to the Ephesians is paraphrased in the Message: "Jesus is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the centre of all this, Christ rules the church. The

In this regard I always find this week's Gospel

How do we love Jesus, now?

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. And here's why: I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was

homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me.' ... the King will say, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me – you did it to me.'" (Matt. 25:34-40)

Do you notice we don't have a set of rules, but a person, whom we are able to love, no strings attached, because that's the way he loves us.

How do you think Jesus is setting our priorities in this parable?

Is it investing my life in the big and the beautiful or in the small and seemingly insignificant? Investing life in the strong and powerful, who have much to give me, or in the weak and

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**Why invest my time and effort in the weak?**

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powerless, who seemingly have nothing to help advance me. Why invest my time and effort in the weak, the overlooked and ignored? What's in it for me?

Jesus says through this parable; Life! Life lived to the full, because is it how his love finds expression. It is how his love grows and flourishes. Here I can love Jesus, no strings attached. Here I can

love expecting nothing in return; which is the nature of Jesus. Jesus doesn't love you because he's missing something and is using you to get it. Jesus loves the weak, the overlooked and ignored, he loves you and me, because that's who he is, no strings attached.

The church year begins with a person; Jesus, and ends with a person; Jesus. How do we prioritise? Jesus. This person is the key to life, the reason for life, not just the season. Thank God we have a person and not a set of rules, or a profit margin, or an all consuming drive to succeed.

Thank God that every Christmas we get to celebrate the birth of a person; Jesus. A person who loves us; not with weak sentiment, or out of need, but because that's who he is, and to remain true to himself