

Apart from Christmas and Easter, we generally don't follow a preaching program. We just start at the beginning of a Book of the Bible, and work our way through it... But having said that, I am continually amazed at how often the Bible reading that we happen to be up to (on a given day), lines up with either current events, or a particular event on the calendar...

And today's probably one of those days, but not in a way that I would plan.

Today, is Mothers' Day. And in the Book of Luke (that we're studying) the **word** "Mother" appears in 17 verses. But only **3** of those verses are actually teaching us about relationships with mothers. (The rest are just so-and-so's mother did this...) So, only 3 verses (in all of Luke), teach us about relationships with mothers...

And at our current rate of working through the Gospel of Luke (and bear with me, because I love maths). We're about half way into the Gospel of Luke (15 months), so it's going to take us a total of around about 120 weeks to get through it. So mathematically, we had a 2.5% chance of landing on one of those 3 verses today. And we did...

Mind you, I'm feeling it could be God's sense of humour that got us here, because on Mothers' Day, I would **never** choose a bible reading that says, "I came to bring divisions in families and Mothers and Daughters",,, *What kind of Mother's Day message would that be??? I cannot imagine, a gold-embossed Mother's Day card, inscribed with today's Bible reading...*

"Dear Mum, Jesus came to bring divisions between Mothers and Daughters, Love Michael"

Anyway, we'll talk about that when we get to it... Let's start at the beginning.

As I said last week, we're in a section of Luke where Jesus has a lot to say about "getting ready", and "staying ready". He has a lot to say about the Kingdom of God, and about how to enter the Kingdom of God...

But the thing is, as we listen to Jesus, we may very-well find that the Kingdom of God is a little bit different to what we expect. You see, the Kingdom of God, we get a little taste of if now, but its **fullness**, is yet to come (when Jesus returns).

Until Jesus returns: yes, the Kingdom of God has begun (breaking into this world), but it's not complete. And, if you've been a Christian for a while, you will know that living the Christian life, can be tough. It may involve heartache and pain...

Now of course, the popular prosperity preachers won't tell you that (and that's why they are so popular) – they will only promise their listeners, what they want to hear. They will offer them:

- blessings now;
- peace now;
- glory now;
- God will fix up all your family problems; and
- He'll make your wife love you more;
- and you children will all of a sudden become perfect little angels...

And that might sometimes happen, but more often, Disciples of Jesus, will continue to experience tragedy; heartache; and pain... But thank God, for the resilience/hope we have, because we know that this life (and the troubles that we have) is short, and our great, sure and certain hope, is in Jesus. When Jesus returns, the troubles of this present life, **will** be finished. And they will pale, in the glory of eternity.

1.

Righto,
Jesus begins with “The coming Judgment”. In fact, Jesus longs for the Day of Judgment.

I wonder, does that upset the image you have of Jesus, that He longs for the Day of Judgment???

If it does, that could be an indicator that you’ve never experienced “**in**justice”... You see, those who **have** suffered “**in**justice”, long for justice, and they long for a “just” judge, to step-in and set things right.

i.e.

In our State of Queensland at the moment, we are in the midst of what the Media is calling:

- “A Crime Epidemic”; or
- “A Violent Crime Epidemic”; or
- “A Youth Crime Epidemic”.

How do we deal with it?

There are currently conflicting voices/ideologies on Law and Order and Crime and punishment...

Many of the “experts” are saying “Incarceration isn’t the answer (especially for youth crime) - we’ve got to keep people out of jail (for all but a last resort)... Because if we send them to jail, when they get out, they’ll just re-offend again”... And they have great concern (rightly or wrongly) for the offender...

*But at the same time, the **victims** of crime –*

The ones:

- *whose homes have been invaded;*
- *whose loved ones have been injured or killed;*
- *whose property has been stolen or destroyed;*

And the rest of the population,

- *who live in fear; or*
- *whose insurance premiums are sky-rocketing because every bit of theft/damage/loss incurred by criminal action, equates to higher and higher insurance premiums...*

And so, there is now, a loud, desperate voice, crying out for justice... “Why are crimes allowed to be committed, and it seems there’s no real consequence” ...

At some point, we **all** cry out for justice, don’t we???

- The husband beats his wife, and doesn’t get convicted. Where’s the justice?
- The rapist, spends a short time in prison, and then gets out on parole

Where's the justice?

- The mega-wealthy who through their corporate structures, send one business broke, while they siphon funds off into another trust or business that can't be touched, leaving their workers and creditors with unpaid entitlements...

And they do it over and over again, with impunity.

Where's the justice?

And the more we love righteousness, the more we will understand how good, righteous judgment is.

When I was going to school, the class would be running amuck – just a few trouble-makers, disrupting the whole class... And the kids who were wanting to learn, just craved for the Principal to pay the class a visit...

Do you long for the Day of Judgment? Not many people do. But I'm going to tell you: The more we become like Jesus, the more we will long for the day that Jesus returns, and judges the nations – the more we will look forward to the day the wicked are punished, and the righteous receive their heavenly reward.

And I can tell you this with confidence, because **Jesus** longs for the Day of Judgment.

49 "I came to cast fire on the earth [He's talking about the Day of Judgment], and would that it were already kindled! (if only it were already happening).

The Day of Judgment... is what Jesus came for,, but not yet...

You see, if Jesus just turned up and “smote” the Earth (that’s a very religious sounding word)... If Jesus had just turned up, judged the world, and burnt all the wicked up to a crisp, that would’ve been righteous/just. But it would not have been merciful... And our God, is a God of mercy.

Psalm 85 is talking about the salvation of God, and it gives us a beautiful image:

Psalm 85:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Isn’t that a beautiful image... **If** when Jesus came, He brought with Him, “justice”, and destroyed the world, He would have been righteous/just in His actions... But God, being merciful, brings “righteousness” **and** “Peace”... **righteousness and peace kiss**

And that’s why Jesus reminds us of the Cross. You see, it’s at the cross, that **righteousness and peace kiss**.

Now, Jesus knew what the cross meant for Him – The humiliation; agony; suffering; death...

He said: ⁵⁰ **I have a baptism to be baptised with...**

For Jesus, it would be a total immersion into pain/suffering/death.

And understandably, as the time of Jesus' crucifixion approached, He was greatly distressed, but He also uses the phrase: **until it is accomplished!**

What did Jesus accomplish at the cross? The way to peace... It is at the cross, where **righteousness and peace kiss**. That's what Jesus accomplished.

You see, for all of my wrong-doing, justice demands I be punished... If God just let me off the hook, that wouldn't be "righteous"... And so, Jesus took the punishment that **I** deserve, upon Himself. He was baptised/immersed in it... And through Jesus, it is now possible for us to have peace with God.

So, Jesus comes, to judge the world with righteousness and justice. But **first**, He made it possible for us to be at peace with God, **on** the Day of Judgment. That is what Jesus accomplished at the cross...

2.

But the thing is, the message of Jesus (and the peace He brings) is **divisive**.

When Jesus was born, the Angels proclaimed “Peace on Earth”, but now Jesus is saying that He would bring “division” rather than “peace”... What’s that about???

The Gospel/(Good News) of Jesus, is that through repentance and faith in Him, we are forgiven/(born again), into the Kingdom of God, and there is peace between us and God. There once was no peace, but now there is...

And so, we have no fear of judgment, because we have repented of all our wrong-doing. God has taken our sin away, and we are now pure and holy (innocent and righteous in God’s sight). (not because we have done no wrong, but because in God’s great mercy, He has forgiven us)...

And so, those who repent of sin and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, **are** at peace with God.

But not everyone is at peace with God. And so, the message of Jesus is **divisive**.

Now, our modern sensibilities might sometimes have a hard time coping with the language that Jesus uses... We live in a different era; Many in our culture, have a very low tolerance of “offence”... In fact, the laws of our land now, are trying to legislate and to make it a crime, to ever offend anyone...

And some of the things Jesus said, if He said them today, He would probably be “cancelled”, because we live in an era where things like: “rhetoric”; and “hyperbole”; and “irony”; “satire”, are completely misunderstood, but Jesus used those tools of communication, and He used them often...

You see, when Jesus said that He came to divide, He **didn't** mean “That was His purpose”. Jesus came to save. But the means of salvation, **is** divisive... The message of Jesus **is** divisive.

If Jesus wasn't offensive, why did they crucify Him??? The things Jesus said, offended, deeply...

And the message of the cross is deeply challenging. The Gospel of Jesus – it challenges:

- the person;
- our ideals;
- philosophy;
- sociology;
- one's upbringing;
- our culture;
- society's norms...

To come to faith in Jesus, and to genuinely start following Jesus, takes a complete change of mindset.

When I was going to school, I think it was in a science class, we were taught that the reason other parts of the world have earthquakes and volcanos and Australia doesn't, is because the whole continent of Australia is on one tectonic plate, and it's these plates shifting against each other, that causes things like Earthquakes and volcanos...

So, you can imagine my surprise, when on the 28th of December 1989, Newcastle was hit with a devastating earthquake (5.6 on the Richter scale). (13 people died).

*It wasn't just surprise – it was total disbelief – “That can't happen” ... You see, I had been taught, that it can't happen ... And I **knew** it couldn't happen... But then it did happen.*

And I realised that what I believed, was indeed “false”. And so I read up on it, and: Yes, Australia is on one tectonic plate, but that plate is running into another one, at a rate of about 7cm/year. And as our plate runs into the other one, it is compressing, and every day, there's little earthquakes, as the fault-lines within with Australia, relieve the stress of this compression...

For me, my whole (school-boy-level) understanding of Australia's geology was completely upended, and set in a new direction...

Let me tell you, the message of the cross, will upend one's entire world view... And that's why it's divisive.

The message of the cross is offensive. It's a message that:

- tells me, I am a sinner, in need of a Saviour... That's offensive.
- tells me that I'm not the master of my own domain – **God** is my master – **He** is the **Lord** – what He says, goes.

- upends my whole life. In fact, it demands such a massive change in my life, Jesus described becoming a Christian as “being born again”.

It involves a complete change in allegiance. We are no longer Citizens of this world, but Citizens of the Kingdom of God.

And when one changes allegiance in such a way, that is divisive.

Which brings us to the Mother’s Day passage. Jesus said:

52 For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three.

53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

Does the concept of “Jesus dividing families”, fit your image of the Gospel??? Probably not... Because we know, that in Christ, there is reconciliation

Reconciliation between:

- us and God;
- fathers and sons; and
- mothers and daughters;
- husbands and wives;
- the black man and the white; even
- the Israeli and the Palestinian

But the reconciliation of Christ, is only effective, when **both** parties are **in** Christ... When those who were enemies, are born again (into the Kingdom of God), they become brothers and sisters in Christ, and by the Holy Spirit, we are reconciled.

But, if a husband receives Christ, that doesn't mean that he will automatically be reconciled to his wife. She might continue to reject Christ, and so there will be a division... There are two different allegiances within the marriage. One is committed to "self" and the Kingdom of this World; The other is committed to "Christ" and the Kingdom of God.

And the division between Fathers and sons; and Mothers and daughters, that's a big thing... I mean, in our culture, sadly, it's almost normal for children to be 'at odds' with their Parents ... But in Jesus' culture, for a child to be against their parents, was utterly shameful...

But in a family, just as there can be deep love and connectedness (and I pray you experience that in your family),,, But you know as well as I do, that in families, there can also be very deep divisions... And possibly the deepest divide, is when a person in the family rejects their upbringing, and rejects all of the values that their parents taught them...

I don't know what I would've done if one of my boys had bought a Ford... (only joking)

But can you imagine what it would've been like for those in the early church?

A daughter tells her Mum, “I’ve become a Christian”... What is the Mother to think???

- “What do you mean you’re following that Jesus bloke???”
- He was a heretic.
- You know our religious leaders had Him put to death, He was so bad!!!”
- What are our friends going to think of us?
- You won’t be allowed in the synagogue anymore.
- Why do you hate us so much?
 - deserting your upbringing
 - turning your back on our religion;
 - the religion of our forefathers;
 - throwing it all back in our face;
 - you’ve brought shame upon us;

“Reconciliation with God”, sometimes mean “separation from people we love”.

Each week, we pray for the persecuted church.

We pray for people like Sahar. Sahar is an Iranian woman who converted to Christianity. When her husband discovered her faith, he threw her out of her home. She’s now separated from her two young children (which is heart-breaking for her.) And this isn’t unusual. Those who convert to Christianity, from Islam, often face intense persecution (sometimes from their own families).ⁱ

But even in **our** culture, when one person in a family commits to following Jesus, (and part of that is repenting of their old ways), others in the family, can be quite offended. Or they may even feel judged.

Anyway,
The picture of family division that Jesus is presenting us with, highlights, and forces us to consider, “What is most important?”

3.

At this point, He turns to the crowds. Up until now, He’s been talking to His Disciples, but now He turns to the crowds. And He gives an example of how we interpret the weather. I’m not going to use His example – I’ll use one for us.

We’ve seen it this week. We’ve had an Easterly wind. If we were on the range, that would probably mean showers of rain. We’re not on the range. That’s 3 or 400km away... But we still know, an Easterly wind has been pumping in moisture.

And we know that when the winds swing around to the North, there’s a system coming that could actually turn that moisture into rain.

But we know that if it turns into a Southerly wind, it’s most likely that it’s going to bring a cool (and usually dry) change...

Or if it becomes a Westerly wind, Hot (and usually dry)...

If we see dark clouds gathering in the west, “Ah, probably going to get a storm”

We've probably gotten lazy with taking notice of the weather now – we just look at the Radar.

But Jesus says to the crowds: ⁵⁶ **You hypocrites!** You know how to interpret these weather patterns, **why do you not know how to interpret the present time?**

What was the present time? The Son of God, had come to them, and most of them couldn't see it. The fact that He called them "hypocrites", reveals that they not recognising Jesus, had more to do with their will. They didn't **want** to recognise Jesus...

Do **we** recognise the present time? We live in the era between the first coming of Jesus, and His return.

4.

Jesus came (the first time round) to give us a means of making peace with God. When He returns, He will be coming back, to judge in righteousness.

⁵⁷ **"And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?"** ⁵⁸ **As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you**

in prison. ⁵⁹ I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny."

Jesus died on the cross, so that we can have peace with God... And Jesus is saying, "Judge yourself". You know what, when I judge myself, I **know** I need a saviour. We all do.

And if I don't turn to Jesus, on the day that He returns, it will be too late...

Interpret the present time. The present time, is an age of grace. The fact that you are here, hearing this today, is the gracious activity of God, revealing Himself to you. And He's revealing His timeline to you.

The present time, is the time to make peace with God...

And when Jesus returns, the Kingdom of God will be complete. There will be no more division; no more unbelief; no more heartache; no more broken relationships...

That's what we look forward to...

Have you made the decision to follow Jesus? Have you interpreted the times?

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,

We thank You for what You accomplished on the Cross.

We thank You, that You 'stayed the course;
that You bore the distress;
as You were immersed in the retribution that I deserved.

Lord, we thank You for your righteousness;
and for Your Just Judgment.

We thank You, that through the cross,
You bring us peace.

And Lord, we turn to You.

Even if others accuse us of being divisive,
by turning from our old life,
and embracing the new,,,
That doesn't matter,
because in faith, we believe.

You have shown us the time,
and we understand the time.

Lord, we repent of sin.
We turn away from our unbelief;
We turn away from our wrong doing.
Please forgive us.

And thank You, that You do.
We don't deserve it,

but You are gracious and merciful.

Thank You, Jesus.

And so now, in confidence,
we pray, "Come Lord Jesus".

Do bring Your Kingdom in all of its fullness.

But until then,
grow Your Kingdom and your Righteousness,
in us.

in Jesus' Name,
Amen.

ⁱ <https://www.opendoors.org.au/frontline-faith/the-hidden-persecution-of-christian-women/>