

Sunday Service ~ September 28, 2025

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

Psalm 34: *I will extol the Lord at all times, his praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the lord with me, let us exalt his name together.*

But now, please join with me in **prayer**. *"Our Heavenly Father, we marvel at your majesty. We praise you with our hearts, minds and souls, for nothing can compare to you. You are almighty, and powerful, you created the heavens and the earth, and everything between. You will reign forever, will judge the world in righteousness, and govern the people with justice. But Lord, you are a loving and merciful God. You are slow to anger and full of compassion. And because of your great love for us, you sent us your Son Jesus Christ, who came to earth and took the punishment that we deserve. For we know that we have sinned against you Lord, we have angered you with our thoughts, with our words, and with our actions. We have been greedy and selfish, and we seek to rely on our own abilities, rather than putting our trust in you. We don't always look out for others, and most importantly, we do not always put you first in everything that we do. For this, Lord, we are truly sorry, and we ask for your forgiveness. We thank you though, for the saving grace of Jesus Christ. We thank you that through Jesus' death and resurrection, he has paid the price for our sins. We thank you that whilst we deserve to be put to death and set apart from you for eternity because of our sins, that Jesus took this punishment upon himself. We thank you that Jesus has restored our relationship with you, that we have been made righteous, and are now able to be with you for eternity. We pray Lord that you will help us to turn away from our sinful lives, help us to live righteous lives, and to always put you first in our lives. Lord, help us to be shining lights so that others may come to see your wonderful glory. And we ask all of this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Song – Come hear the angels sing

[Come Hear The Angels Sing // Emu Music - YouTube](#)

<p>1. Come hear the angels sing Worthy is the Lamb that was slain Gathering round the throne Hail the Son of Man Hail the Son of Man Not for their sin He died It was no angel crucified And yet they hold Him in their sight And live to praise their Lord</p>	<p>3. What is the song we'll sing As we join in heaven with our God? A people from every land Crowding round the Lamb Crowding round the Lamb We'll sing salvation's song How many million voices strong! We'll sing the glory of our King Of Jesus Christ our Lord!</p>
<p>2. Come hear the elders sing As they fall in praise to the Lamb Bowing before the throne Laying down their crowns Laying down their crowns They praise Him for His blood With which He purchased men for God They praise the Saviour of the world</p>	

Bible Reading – Matthew 5:1-12 (NIV)

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him,² and he began to teach them. He said:

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Pastoral Prayer

Pray for Egypt. (Population 114 million, Christians 10 million). In Egypt, Christians often face discrimination in their communities. Christian women are **harassed** on the streets, especially in rural areas, and Christian children are **bullied** at school. Pray that Egyptian Christians who follow Jesus out of Islam will be kept safe. Ask God to help Christians who have converted from Islam find fellowship. Pray for Christians' legal rights, that they will not be discriminated against.

Pray for religious freedoms in Australia. Lord God, we thank You for the freedom we have in Australia to worship You and proclaim the gospel without fear. Please protect these freedoms so that Your word may continue to be preached clearly and openly. Give us courage to use our freedom wisely, for the honour of Christ and the good of our neighbours.

Pray for Applebys. Pray for Applebys' in Cambodia for their upcoming Mainland Southeast Asia conference 10-15 Oct with 130 workers plus 80 kids. Please pray that the conference will be a profound and impactful time together & for the children's program & team coming to run it. Pray specifically for planning meetings starting **this Monday** with the hotel. Pray for wisdom & sensitivity as they lead the team with ongoing challenges. Praise God for the healing of their Filipino pastor colleague's burns after a house fire and for treatment of his wife's PTSD as they have a new baby arriving.

Pray for Stephen. Pray that the Lord might bring times of refreshment for Stephen and Kaylene as they are away on holidays. That you will keep him humble and dependent upon God in all that he does. Pray for his ongoing involvement in the redevelopment and the Vanuatu mission, as well as his wider commitment to Women's Ministry in the Church, that he would find the right balance of work, rest and play.

Song – See the Man <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bB1RMIB6llg>

1. See the man

Formed by the Father's hand
Dust turned to flesh
Filled with his breath
In the image of God
Loved and blessed
Given the very best
Destined to rule,
Fill and subdue all of the earth
But death entered the day
He ate from the tree
Condemned all of mankind
To follow his lead

But one day a man will come

And undo what he had done
One day a Saviour will return

2. See the man

Leaving his father's land
Sent by the Lord
Journeys towards
A promised place
By his faith
Would come a nation great
In numbers surpassed

All of the stars	And all his fullness
Shining in space	Dwelling in him
His name would be renowned	God's delight
From the east to the west	Speaking the words of life
And all people on earth	The Kingdom's revealed
Through him would be blessed	The broken are healed
And one day a man will come	The blind given sight
To finish what had begun	And for all history's sin
One day a Saviour would return	The righteous is slain
3. See the man	By his blood, death is defeated
Come from his Father's side	He's risen again
His word become flesh	And soon he will come again
	And then forever reign
	One day our Saviour will return

Bible Reading – Matthew 5:13-16 (NIV)

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. 14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Sermon – An Unlikely Impact! (Paul Barnes)

How do we impact the world? I think we all agree with the sentiment from Denzel Washington “Don’t just aspire to make a living. Aspire to make a difference.” The world is full of these sayings. But how to we make a difference? A lasting impact? One of the central answers to this question in our modern world is that the answer is found within us. For example, Ralph Waldo Emerson said that the key is self-trust. Walt Disney and Oprah Winfrey believe our impact will come from us living out our dreams. You even find this sentiment in advertising. So, Apple would have us “Think Different”, Adidas “Impossible is Nothing”, Nike “Just Do It”, GoPro “Be a Hero”.

From these, and many other examples, there is one clear message – to change the world, you need to be bold, you need to trust yourself, because you are unique and your uniqueness will change the world the way you want it to be. But as usual, we find Jesus is different from this. Today we are in Matthew 5 and Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount which very much challenges this worldview.

Context

The context of the sermon is that after his temptations Jesus has begun his public ministry, and he is becoming more popular in the region and people are being attracted to his ministry. Now in the midst of this rise in popularity Jesus wants to teach them the characteristics of those who are in the kingdom of God. We obviously don’t have time to do through 3 chapters so we’re just going to focus on 5:3-16.

The Beatitudes

The beatitudes are well liked and well-known, but too often they are just seen as these pithy little sayings to make us feel good or spiritual, when in reality they are as challenging as almost anything that Jesus teaches. They are some of the most outlandish things Jesus will teach. The Beatitudes are as counterintuitive and countercultural as you get.

The Beatitudes centre around this idea of the blessed. Blessed means “happy”, however it is not as a superficial, temporary emotion that we associate with happiness but a deep joy in God that is unaffected

by circumstances. The blessed have a strength of character, spiritual character, that the world and the devil cannot get at. This is not an attitude that we can learn from the world or that the world can give us.

We'll take them in small groups. The first 3 beatitudes focus on the internal posture of the blessed towards God, towards themselves and towards the world around them.

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The first posture of these blessed people isn't a power stance but one on their knees in weakness. It is not those who pretend they have it all together that God blesses and that have a deep joy but those who acknowledge their spiritual poverty which, in turn, makes them draw near to God. This is the opposite of the modern attitude where I am the hero of my story, where self-confidence and self-assertion are key. Jesus is commanding those who see the empty bank account and don't just pretend it's not there or work on their spirituality to get back to God but come to the most gracious benefactor again and again. It is a similar idea to Psalm 116:6-7, 12-13.

6 ...when I was brought low, he saved me. 7 Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you...

12 What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me? (How do I respond to all of God's rich kindness to me?) 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord,

My cup is constantly empty, what do I do? I bring it again and again to the overflowing fount of grace. The blessed in the first beatitude know that God doesn't tire of enriching the poor in spirit. So, Jesus is saying that the kingdom of heaven belongs not to those who think they have it all together but to those who can sing with Augustus Toplady "Nothing in my hand I bring."

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

In the second Beatitude those who mourn are blessed not because they are depressed but because they look at what sin is doing in themselves, and what sin is doing in the world, and they mourn over it. They don't trivialise it, avoid it, just focus on the positives. No, they look at themselves and the world and mourn. I've always found it strange that news presenters have 55 minutes of negative news then 1 story of a dog riding a surfboard and pretend the world is great and wish us a happy night. That's delusional and it doesn't help. The paradox here is that the joyful, the blessed person, mourns. Also, I want to point out, which is particularly relevant in our modern context, Jesus doesn't say "Blessed are those that critique the world". Anyone can critique the sin in the world, even Richard Dawkins said that the Western world is poorer for the loss of Christian influence. It takes no spiritual insight to see that. But how many mourn sin in themselves and the world?

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Meekness means to be gentle and humble because we see ourselves and others as God does. It is a Philippians 2:3 attitude: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility [meekness] count others more significant than yourselves." The meek are more than happy to see others succeed, to see others benefit over themselves. If there is one beatitude that we instinctively think won't impact the world it's this one. There is no way meekness can have a lasting impact. If I'm the difference, if my crazy ideas and personality are what the world needs, if self-esteem and self-assertion are key, meekness will just hinder me.

Hitler understood this about Christianity: "You see, it's been our misfortune to have the wrong religion. Why didn't we have the religion of the Japanese, who regard sacrifice for the Fatherland as the highest good? The Mohammedan [Muslims] religion too would have been more compatible to us than Christianity. Why did it have to be Christianity with its meekness and flabbiness?" To Hitler, meekness was weakness. If

you have worldly ambition (like conquering Europe or following your dreams), meekness won't help. That's how we're told the world works.

While the first 3 are on the posture of the blessed to themselves and their place before God and others, the next 4 are on the desires of the blessed for themselves and those around them.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Godly people are marked by a desire to see not just personal righteousness but also to see God's righteousness in the world. The joyful in God know it's not about promoting yourself, your brand, your piety, but what God wants for the world. Part of this righteousness is to see God's mercy and peace, which they have personally experienced, to be extended out from themselves to the world around them. 7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy... 9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Seeing peace and mercy in this world, not self-promotion, is a mark of the truly blessed/joyful.

A story that I heard recently that really struck me about the impact of mercy was in 2020 Samuel Davidson was driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol and he hit and killed 3 children from the same family. The parents, Danny and Leila Abdallah lost 3 of their 4 kids. If there was a situation to not feel blessed (deep joy), this is it. But in the press conference after, they said they forgave Samuel. I don't know if I could do that, maybe I could, but here is where Danny Abdallah challenges me and where a man whose deep blessedness (joy) is not changed by circumstances and God's righteousness is shown through incredible mercy. Not only did Danny publicly say this, but since 2023 he has been meeting with Samuel Davidson in prison and sharing the gospel with him, and Samuel Davidson is now not only Danny's friend but also a Christian - changed by the mercy of a broken but blessed father.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. This desire is to see righteousness, mercy and peace is driven by a pure heart, which is more than just not watching inappropriate videos but is actually about having a singleness of purpose. Your desires haven't been corrupted by the world. Jesus makes this point in 6:33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Seeking and desiring God's righteousness in ourselves and the world is the singleness of focus of the blessed.

But how will the world react? You would almost expect Jesus to say here "By doing this, you will change the world." But in another unexpected twist, even these desires the world hates.

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Our world is so held by sin that it persecutes those who want to meekly see righteousness, mercy and peace. So, if the world is that hostile that we will be persecuted, reviled, falsely accused, do we pull back? How then are we to impact this world if it is this hostile? The next section answers that.

13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

Salt was used to enhance flavour and to preserve meat. So, Jesus is calling Christians to have a similar impact in this world. But how? We need to remember 2 things:

1) We need to be attached to the world: Salt that isn't attached to the food has no impact on it. So, we too need to not remove ourselves from the world. This has been my issue with monasteries. Essentially, they

are saying that the world is evil, so avoid it and don't engage with it. You see this in far too many Christian churches, institutions, families. That is not what Jesus is calling for here. You can't preserve or impact the world from yelling behind a wall of self-preservation and self-righteousness. Christians need to be in the world.

2) Salt needs to stay salty: As Jesus warns, if Christians become too influenced by the world and lose their distinctiveness, then they are useless. Salt in the ancient world lost its distinctiveness when it became corrupted by outside influences. In World War One some Anglican chaplains in the British army thought that to be accepted and influence their peers, they needed to join in the drinking games and get drunk with the soldiers. That is what Jesus is warning against. The "saltiness" we spread is not your wacky personality or weird hobbies, it's the Beatitudes, this depth of joy in God no matter the circumstances.

Because this joyful saltiness points to the light. "You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." The way to impact the world is to be so joyful in God and so Christ-exalting in our actions that people see that and know that these people are different.

But does this actually work? Can we really make an impact in the world that mocks these attitudes? Importance of biographies (Hebrews 11). I want to show, very briefly, how having a deep joy (blessedness) in God, displayed in these beatitudes have changed the world through the life and impact of my favourite, William Wilberforce.

William Wilberforce

Wilberforce is most famous for being the leader of the abolition cause to end the slave trade but what is less well known is how he went about doing that and 100s of other changes he had on the world that are still impacting the world today. He has his faults.

Wilberforce was born in 1759 in Hull, England, into a wealthy merchant family. He entered Parliament in 1780 at the age of 21 but in 1785-1786 he becomes a Christian, and he wonders whether he can still be a politician or should he leave public life for a more secluded life away from the corruption of British parliament and public office. He decides he needs advice and goes to see John Newton who convinces him to stay, writing later that "It is hoped and believed that the Lord has raised you up for the good of His church and for the good of the nation." So, Wilberforce stays in public office to seek God's righteousness in Britain and the world.

But what was 18th century Britain like? How was the 18th century world in England decaying and dark? Why did they need salt and light? Life was brutal for most of the population. Public executions were encouraged to create fear in the lower classes which in turn bred a culture of violence and abuse. Poverty was seen as a state given by God, so it was unfashionable (and even ungodly) to help the poor. Only the elite were educated so most children resorted to stealing and a life of crime. In London 25% of unmarried women were prostitutes, with the average aged being 16. The slave trade thrived because it was largely unseen, and it generated so much money it was political suicide to even criticise it – you could even be killed.

So, how was Wilberforce salt and light in that world? Firstly, he was pure in heart – single purposed. He stated that the "grand characteristic mark of the true Christian is his desiring to please God in all his thoughts, and words, and actions...to 'let his light shine before men'..." By "please God" Wilberforce meant a heartfelt joy in God and this joy would be light in his dark society. And this wasn't a vague desire, but it expressed itself in the 2 great objects of his life. On October 28, 1787, he wrote in his diary, "God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners."

He believed God had called him to achieve the impossible – end the billion-dollar Slave Trade and change the moral standards of society which they didn't want (e.g. provide a better life for those teenage girls caught in prostitution).

Opposition

But it wasn't easy. Blessed are those are persecuted – Wilberforce faced immense persecution. If you want to stand up and take a stance on these issues, be prepared to suffer. From 1787 to 1807, Wilberforce's bill to end the Slave Trade failed for a variety of reasons. For example, in 1796, the abolition bill was defeated, 74-70 because 10 of his allies were at the opera. His despondency led to a very serious illness, and he nearly died. His opposition of the slave trade led to death threats as he threatened to lose some people billions of dollars. In 1792 Robert Norris and John Kimber were captains of slave ships who threatened to attack and even kill Wilberforce for the next 2 years, with Wilberforce needing an armed bodyguard. His character was attacked. William Cobbett, in August of 1823 publicly wrote this about him: "You make your appeal in Picadilly, London, amongst those who are wallowing in luxuries, proceeding from the labour of the people...What an insult it is, and what an unfeeling, what a cold-blooded hypocrite must he be that can send it forth; what an insult to call upon people under the name of free British labourers; to appeal to them on behalf of Black slaves, when these free British labourers; these poor, mocked, degraded wretches, would be happy to lick the dishes and bowls, out of which the Black slaves have breakfasted, dined, or supped."

Humanly speaking, this opposition should have destroyed him – he was trying to achieve the impossible. John Wesley knew this and wrote a letter to encourage Wilberforce in 1791: "Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils; but if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh, be not weary of well-doing!"

How did he react to this persecution? How did he pursue God's righteousness to a world that hated the faith he professed? Jesus taught we are to react with joy and that this God-filled joy would be salt and light in the world. Therefore, we find that in Wilberforce that joy was the beating heart of his faith: "We can scarcely indeed look into any part of the sacred volume [the Bible] without meeting abundant proofs, that it is the religion of the Affections which God particularly requires...Joy...is enjoined on us as our bounden duty...A cold...unfeeling heart is represented as highly criminal."

His default emotion to the world around him was not one of bitterness or frustration but joy – joy in Jesus. This is probably the thing I most admire about Wilberforce. Wilberforce never allowed the evil and darkness of the issues he stood up against to twist his own joy in God. He didn't allow the fact that 1/3 of the slaves on the Middle Passage (from west Africa to the Caribbean) died and were thrown overboard (many of whom deliberately so that the ship captain could claim it on insurance because slaves were property not people), that the trade promoted African tribes to attack each other and enslave each other; that most of British society were wilfully ignorant of the horrors of the trade as it made many in power rich (including many in the church). He didn't allow anything he discovered about the trade or society make him an intensely bitter man.

Rather, he firstly followed Jesus' teaching in mourning for this sin in the world. In Parliament on 12 May 1789, he confessed "I mean not to accuse anyone but to take the shame upon myself, in common indeed with the whole Parliament of Great Britain, for having suffered this horrid trade to be carried on under their authority. We are all guilty—we ought all to plead guilty, and not to exculpate ourselves by throwing the blame on others." He wept over the slave trade and the state of British society.

But like Jesus promised in the beatitudes, this mourning led to a deep joy which radiated out to others. The poet Robert Southey said of Wilberforce, "I never saw any other man who seemed to enjoy such a

perpetual serenity and sunshine of spirit. In conversing with him, you feel assured that there is no guile in him; that if ever there was a good man and happy man on earth, he was one."

James Stephen, recalled after Wilberforce's death, "Being himself amused and interested by everything, whatever he said became amusing or interesting...His presence was as fatal to dullness as to immorality. His mirth [joyful amusement] was as irresistible as the first laughter of childhood."

A Miss Sullivan wrote to a friend about Wilberforce around 1815: "By the tones of his voice and expression of his countenance he showed that joy was the prevailing feature of his own mind, joy springing from entireness of trust in the Savior's merits and from love to God and man...His joy was quite penetrating."

This joy wasn't a private emotion, but one fed by a hunger and thirst to see God's righteousness known and shown, and that led to an extraordinary impact on world history. After 20 years of fighting, in 1807 Wilberforce accomplished the abolition of the Slave Trade. In 1833, 3 days before he died, he saw the abolition of slavery in the British empire. But that's not all.

Involved in founding the Bible Society

Helped found the Church Missionary Society

He led agricultural reforms to supply more affordable food for the poor

Organised support for the blind and disabled

Led the campaign to improve housing for the poor

Co-founder of the RSPCA

With Hannah More, he set up (and funded) schools for the poor.

He fought hard in parliament to allow missionaries to evangelise in India, which led to William Carey (the founder of the modern mission's movement).

He also advocated that the First Fleet should have a chaplain, and that the early colony of NSW should have missionaries.

Wilberforce lobbied for humane treatment of convicts and Indigenous Australians in 1811 under Governor Macquarie.

Eric Metaxas "Taken all together, it's difficult to escape the verdict that William Wilberforce was simply the greatest social reformer in the history of the world." John Pollock "There is little doubt that Wilberforce changed the moral outlook of Great Britain...The reformation of manners [morals] grew into Victorian virtues and Wilberforce touched the world when he made goodness fashionable." One clear way he did this is the world's view on slavery today.

When the Slave Trade was abolished in 1807, Samuel Romilly gave a speech in parliament that contrasted Napoleon and Wilberforce, and it is quite fitting. The world remembers and advocates for the attitudes that lead to a Napoleon – self-confidence, self-promotion, arrogance, my dreams over all else. Yet, Napoleon destroyed people's lives and, as Romilly put it, be haunted by his guilty conscience. Jesus teaches that the attitudes to change the world aren't found in the world, but we see them in Jesus and we also in a 5 foot 2, sickly man whose deep joy in Jesus not only changed his life but changed the world.

Song – This Life I live [This Life I Live \(Song Leading Video\) // Emu Music - YouTube](#)

1. 1. This life I live is not my own,
For my redeemer paid the price.
He took it to be his alone,
To be his treasure and his prize.
The things of earth I leave behind
To live in worship of my King.
His is the right to rule my life,
3. There is a voice that pierced the grave
A power that rolled the stone away
A sound of life, I know I'm saved
The voice of God has called my name
So I will rise, and in the air
Behold the glory of the King
I will not fear to meet him there

Mine is the joy to live for him.

I know my life is hid with him.

2. I died to sin upon the cross
I'm bound to Jesus in his death
The old is gone, and now I must
Rely on him for every breath
With every footstep that I tread
What mysteries he has in store
I cannot know what lies ahead
But know that he has gone before.

Benediction. *"You are the light of the world... ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:13,16)*