

I want to begin with these very poignant images of all the young men of St George's who gave their lives in the tragedy of war. I want to thank Evan for his loving work of bringing their lives the dignity of our remembering.

Evan very kindly gave me permission to add the music to these images, so I had the opportunity to spend precious time looking into their faces. As photos can do, their eyes met my eyes and I felt the deep connection of our shared humanity across the ages.

As you can imagine it was a deeply moving experience and I shed a few tears.

Once again, I was reminded very forcibly that all of these young men were around the age of Evan when their lives were cut short.

As Jeremy so beautifully said at his Anzac talk... *All of them were young men who had dreams and ambitions. They had futures they could imagine, and they gave them up because they valued something larger. **They had the courage to believe in a future they wouldn't live to see.***

The reason I start with this, is because it's the most poignant and sobering reminder we can all have, of WHY the Risen Jesus in His final appearance in Matthew's gospel - issued this calling and challenge, to his disciples and to all would-be followers to come. Including you and I.



It's become known as the Great Commission. As I like to think of it - the great CO-Mission. Because we are co-participants with God in this mission endeavour.

**Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**

The stark reality is that these young men, (as are all victims of war), are the casualties of our collective human failure to live as God intended us to live. Our failure to live out the commandments of Jesus to be the God flavours and God colours that are life-bringing and bring us hope.

War is always a reflection of the powers and dominions of darkness at work in the world and the ultimate consequence of our human folly. Of our never-ending propensity for violence, Our failure to recognise the sacred connection we all share as people created in the image of God. In a word, our sin.

As followers of Christ, the work of the Church has *always* been about revealing an alternative and more beautiful way of being human. As Canadian Pastor and Podcaster Carey Neuiwhof put it - **The role of the Church is to stand as an alternative to the culture, not an echo of it.**

Jesus Christ had a name for this radically alternative script.

He called it the Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Heaven. They mean the same thing. Scripture just gives us two different ways of describing the same reality.

It's when God's good and healing and more beautiful Way, is sovereign. Sovereign in our hearts, our minds. Sovereign in *all* situations. As Paul puts it in today's passage... **When Christ, fills all**

**things everywhere with himself.** This is New Creation. As John 's gospel often calls it, the Way of the Light.



And as Jeremy pointed out last week, what we are now witnessing is a real hunger of so many people (particularly the young) who are yearning and searching for a true alternative to our current cultural noise. For the light to penetrate the darkness.

They're not looking for just another echo - they're looking for a Holy alternative. A living encounter with the sacred and the transcendent.

**I hear it in my own conversations and the conversations of others.**

People are tired and weary of rage and anger. Tired of hypocrisy and the BS of political power struggles that divide and fragment us. People are yearning for something more authentic and life-giving.

They want to belong to a community that offers something different. Like hope, grace, truth and **joy**. They want to experience the God flavours and the God colours that can actually nourish our souls and bring light to our lives.

**And here's the real hope in all of this.**

**There is a growing recognition among many, that Jesus Christ is the Way and the Truth for this alternative spiritual quest.**

So today, we want to continue exploring how we at St George's can go even deeper in our own response to this movement of God's Spirit at work in the world. Rise to this challenge of Jesus.

We are truly grateful for the many beautiful expressions of God's healing presence that we already witness and experience every single week here at St George's.

On Tuesday Jeremy and I were chatting to one of our ESOL people (who's here today) telling us of how this community has touched her life. It wasn't just the words; it was how she expressed them. She was physically expressive.

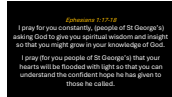
She said, *"This community is filled with the love of God; I feel it in my soul"*. She actually said, *"it's like being in heaven"*. (put this on the website).

But in all seriousness, it's been a remarkable week of seeing the Spirit weaving its way through conversations, chance encounters, people coming forward to say basically ..."how can I be part of this". Jeremy and I sat down in the Pastoral prayer room on Thursday just to catch breath.

**So how can we take this even deeper? How can we build on what's already taking place?**

- How can we all be the God flavours and colours to each other?
- What might it look like for you to participate more fully in this life-bringing, hope-filled calling?

Imagine that beautiful prayer that Cindy read today from St Paul to the Church of Ephesus – is being prayed directly to you and I today. Paul praying for life of this Church community.



**I pray for you constantly, (people of St George's) asking God to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might *grow* in your knowledge of God. I pray (for you people of St George's) that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called.**

**As Jeremy said at the Anzac service yesterday,  
what this world so desperately needs, is the courage to hope.**

It needs a church and a people who have a confident hope and are rising to this challenge of being the alternative Christ WAY and not just another cultural echo.

**So let me offer 3 wisdoms of encouragement from our scripture  
of HOW we as a community can rise to this challenge.**

Firstly, these words from the Risen Christ.



**Matthew 28:16-17**  
Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee,  
to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.  
When they saw him, they worshipped him;  
but some doubted.

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When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.**

I find it reassuring and encouraging - that even in his own small congregation of followers, Jesus had those who worshipped him and others who still doubted.

At any one time, every congregation is made up of those who feel convicted - those struggling with doubts – and everyone in between.

**But Jesus didn't seem concerned and he made no distinction.**

He sent them all out to be part of this Co-Mission with God. Clearly, we don't have to be the perfectly formed Christian to become more deeply involved in this vision for our community. Or to shine the light of Christ in your local sphere of influence.

In fact, the very first thing the Risen Jesus does - is come back to the very disciples who betrayed him- to say ... **“Don't be afraid - be at peace – and remember, I am with you ALWAYS - to the end of the age.”**

What would it look like for you to find the courage (in spite of your doubts) to take the first step into a new landscape of hope. Whatever this may be, you can be confident that Jesus is alongside you saying, 'don't be afraid, be at peace, I am with you always.'

**The second wisdom encouragement comes from these words of Jesus**



**Go and *make* disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.** There's a very important question to ask with these words.

**How do we go about this 'making' of disciples?**

Because the blunt truth, is that nothing has probably cost Jesus more disciples than the dubious tactics of those most intent on recruiting them. If you want to be ineffective at reaching unchurched people, keep judging them.

The wisdom guide for how we go about this, comes from the next words Jesus gives to His own disciples. **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”**

We all know the sad stories of how ‘authority’ in the wrong hands has been abused by those given the privilege of church leadership. ‘*Making*’ people disciples has been more about spiritual coercion and manipulation.

We can even use the ‘authority of God’ to leverage spiritual and emotional control over others.

**So let’s make it clear.**

We here as at St George’s as a leadership team, are not interested in this kind of ‘authority’. All ‘authority’ belongs to Jesus and we are simply called to serve His authority with humility, grace and love.

St Paul clearly gets this wisdom because he said this.

**22 God has put all things under the authority of Christ for the benefit of the church**

Our role under the authority of Christ – is to focus firstly on our own hearts.

Cultivate the Commandments Jesus called us to obey so that we shape and form our lives around them. And then as Jesus said, **“be the light bearers.”**

Radiate this alternative script of the Kingdom. Be reconcilers. Practise generous hospitality. Only do unto others what you would want them to do to you.

Live lives centred in prayer - and above all, love God and love neighbour.

I’m a great believer in repeating wisdom quotes that keep us on track so here’s one from Madeline L’Engle that hits the nail on the Kingdom head.

"We do not draw people to Christ by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it."  
Madeleine L'Engle

**"We do not draw people to Christ by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, (this is an echo of culture) we do it by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it."**

— Madeleine L’Engle

**The best way to evangelise and ‘*teach*’ the beautiful Gospel – is to live it out beautifully.**

**The final wisdom I offer is from these words from Proverbs which is known as the wisdom book of the bible.**

Of all the scripture verses, I’ve tried to make this one of my own absolute guiding lights.

5:1-7  
"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and God will show you which path to take."

**5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.**

**6 Seek his will in all you do, and God will show you which path to take.**

## How many times have you seen the deep truth of this at work?

Something feels beyond your capacity, so you surrender it in trust to God. Instead of relying on your own understanding, you seek the Spirit's wisdom and insight. And God reveals the path forward into which you can take the first step.

As we continue to move forward - wanting to be a life-bringing alternative and not an echo– this really is our guiding mantra.

As I said this past week, we've seen some beautifully encouraging signs of people catching the movement of the Spirit. One of them is the man who I want to invite to come and briefly share a few words.

### GRAY PATERSON

As Jeremy said last week – if we want to be part of what God is doing, this is the calling of all of us. Wisdom from the always wise Eugene Peterson.

“Every call to worship is a call into the Real World. We encounter such constant, skilled and systematic distortion of the truth that we always in danger of losing our grip on reality.

The reality, of course, is that God is sovereign and Christ is saviour.

The reality is that prayer is our mother tongue and the eucharist our basic food.

The reality is that baptism, not Myers-Briggs, defines who we are.”

Eugene Peterson

...never get to see automatic re-act against a world +  
 ...the more we know the more we  
 ...automatically act out of ignorance of our own mind +  
 ...the more we know the more we know of our mind +  
 ...the more we know the more we know of our mind +  
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- Culture is hungry for an alternative way of being human. It doesn't want another empty echo.
- Jesus gave us his challenge to be the alternative. To be the God flavours and God colours.
- Jesus believed in *all* His followers even those with doubts.
- Jesus promised to be with us as we find the courage to take the first step.
- So trust in the Lord with all your heart. Seek the Spirit's wisdom and guidance in all situations - and God will show you the way.