



P I C T O N Baptist Church

**“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step
with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners
take or sit in the company of mockers.”**

Psalm 1:1 (NIV)



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TODAY'S SERVICE

Opening Song All together

God of Ages

Prayer & Notices Pene Sarjeant

Offering All together

Singing All together

How Great is our God

You Laid Aside Your Majesty

You are my All in All

Prayer

Singing All together

As We Gather May Your Spirit Work

Within Us

Message Deo

The Blessed Life

(Psalm 1)

Closing Song All together

You are my All in All

Prayer & Benediction Deo

✳ If you have any questions or need help, please ask one of the welcomers who will be happy to help you.

✳ If you would like prayer after the service today, ask the people around you or come to the front and someone will pray for you.

✳ A crèche is available down at the foyer. The service is relayed into the room so you are able to listen to it. Please ensure the room is left tidy.

✳ We invite you to stay for a cup of tea after the service.

PASTORAL NOTES

Kia ora! Happy New Year! Welcome to our worship this morning. If you are a first-time guest, I encourage you to fill out a blue visitor card and hand it to the welcomers or drop it in one of the offering bags.

We all want our new year to be blessed and happy. But what will it take for that to happen? We could get some good tips from Google and from the media, but just be careful that we don't get squeezed into the world's mold. The apostle Paul's warning is always spot on: "Don't be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Rom 12:1-2). Perhaps there is no greater area where Christians could be squeezed into the world's mold than the one of success, fulfillment, and happiness.

This morning we will let God's Word show us how we can live a truly blessed and happy life. This may not be new to many of us, but we all need to hear again, especially at this time of the year. So I hope our reflection on Psalm 1 will help to set us on the right direction for this year.

Looking forward: Next week I'll be preaching on the subject of fruitfulness (based on John 15), which in important ways is connected with the blessedness in Psalm 1. Then on the third Sunday of January we will embark on a new sermon series on prayer which will take us through to April. I'm convinced that a truly blessed and fruitful life is characterised by prayerfulness.

Serving the Body: New Year is a good time to think about ways of serving our Lord and His church. Here at PBC we need help in the areas of evangelism, prayer ministry, administration, mission, worship, music & sound, and others. I'd love to talk to you if you'd like to help.

Blessings in Christ, Deo

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BLESSED?

By Alan Stanley

Lecturer at Brisbane School of Theology

You don't have to scroll down far on your Facebook or Twitter feed to see someone that is "feeling blessed." The word "blessed" slips so easily off our lips. But what does it actually mean? What do we mean when we ask God to bless our children, our activities, or our church? What would blessed children look like, or a blessed church service? Only recently in church someone prayed from the front, "Lord, we are so blessed!" What did they mean? I suspect they were acknowledging in a very general way the absence of hardship here in Australia; perhaps

the prosperity that the nation enjoys, probably the freedom we have to be a Christian without fear of reprisal.

But if that is what it means to be blessed what does that mean for Christians in countries where the hardships are greater and the freedom is restricted? Are they not blessed?

A friend of mine visited an African country a few years ago and one of the African Christians said to him: "It must be so hard to be a Christian in Australia." My friend asked him what he meant. The man responded, "You have so much it must be hard to depend on God."

Humbling perspective, but there is no doubt that this is how Jesus views things. At the end the first century the resurrected Jesus told the church at Smyrna, "I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich!" (Revelation 2:9a), while he told the church at Laodicea, "You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" (Revelation 3:17). One church is poor and yet they are rich. The other is rich and yet they are poor. Quite obviously then, blessing has nothing to do with a high bank balance and the absence of hardships. Yet this is a contrast to the way many Christians think and speak about what it means to be blessed.

Jesus' tells us what it means to be blessed: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12). Notice the reason that persecuted people are blessed is "because great is your reward in heaven." Jesus doesn't link blessing to circumstances that in the end will not last forever, he links it to the kingdom of heaven.

To be blessed means to be in the kingdom. That is the only criteria. This is why Jesus compared the "kingdom of heaven" to a "treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (Matthew 13:44). The kingdom is worth everything and one should do whatever they can—sell all they have if necessary—to make sure they are in it. Only then are they blessed.

What this means is that anything that brings us into contact with God's kingdom is to be viewed as a blessing. As it so happens, persecution will do that far more effectively than prosperity will. When, therefore, we pray that God would bless us, what we are ultimately asking for is that God would do whatever it takes to bring us more under his kingly rule—which sounds very much like "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

To be blessed is to see more of God. This has always been the case. God's design "to bless the Israelites" (Numbers 6:23) was to pray:

"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)

Notice that the prayer in the first line—"The LORD bless you"—is developed in the third line—"the LORD make his face shine on you"—and then again in the last line—"and give you peace." In other words, to be blessed is to see God's face.

God may dispel the winds in our lives and take away whatever it is that is causing us to strain at the oars, but will that bring us peace? Moses knew, and the disciples came to know it too, peace would only come through having God make his face to shine upon us. And that is precisely what he has done in the person of Jesus Christ at the cross. It is at the cross that we see the magnificence of God's character and identity. But it is also, typically, at those cross-like moments in our own lives where the wind is howling and we are straining at the oars that we also are in a position to see more clearly the character and identity of God. And at that point, we are blessed. We are precisely where God wants us to be.

NOTICES

Hosting Volunteers Needed

New hosting volunteers are needed – if you'd like to be included in the roster, please see or contact Carol Tapp at 027 773 5263 or carolt.marykay@gmail.com.

Bible Study Group

The Tuesday morning (10am) Bible study group at Pene's resumes on 15th Jan.

Weekly Bulletin

Want to read back issues of our weekly bulletin? Visit www.pictonbaptist.org and click on Weekly Bulletin.

Verse of the Day

Our newly improved church website now features a **Verse of the Day**.

Any Prayer Requests?

If you have any prayer request for the prayer chain, contact Judith Dodge at 573 9245.

ROSTERS*

Hosting

6th Jan P Sarjeant & G Macdonald
13th Jan L Stevenson & S Lavers (Communion)
20th Jan D & A Le Heux
27th Jan B & M Pettigrew (Communion)

Music & Sound

6th Jan: Gwenda Galbraith (leading), Graham Galbraith (keyboard), Allison Le Heux (singer), Gyllian Macdonald (projector), Bill Pettigrew (sound)

13th Jan: Guan (leading), Jude Stretton (singer), Bill Pettigrew (projector), Steve Lavers (sound)

20th Jan: Allison Le Heux (leading), Graham Galbraith (keyboard), Kirsty Baldwin (singer), Te Mara Riwaka (projector), Andy Baldwin (sound)

27th Jan: Garry Stanley (leading), Ana Woolf (keyboard), Allison Le Heux (singer), Gyllian Macdonald (projector), Steve Lavers (sound)

*If the date doesn't suit please arrange a swap with others on the roster.