

"OUT OF A DONKEY'S MOUTH" (Numbers 21-24)

Is God Silent?

The God who Speaks

"A prophet for Moab—the free word of God"

Balak sends for Balaam the seer (22:1-10)

Balaam learns he is dependent upon God for insight (22:21-41)

Lesson 1: the world of God cannot be summoned

Lesson 2: no matter how God speaks, he must be listened to and obeyed.

Lesson 3: God promises to speak to us in his Bible

"A promise for Israel—the free word of God"

Balaam utters four oracles:

1st message (23:7-10)

2nd & 3rd messages (23:18-24; 24:3-9)

4th message (24:15-19)

"A promise for Us—the free word of Jesus"



St Stephen's – Tamworth

"Enabling faith—Knowing the truth—Pursuing godliness"

CHURCH MATTERS

29 September 2019

PASTORAL STAFF

Minister

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Pastoral Assistant

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SESSION CLERK

Mr Dale Martin

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Crown & Mathews Street,
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Sunday at 9:30am

CHURCH OFFICE

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Dear friends,

Welcome to church, especially if you are new or visiting as a guest. We are glad that you are here to share this morning with us.

I've been reading an article entitled, "You're So Depraved, You Probably Think This Church is About You". It's an attention seeking headline which, I presume, was grabbed from the song, "You're So Vain, You Probably Think this Song is about You".

What on earth does the author mean? What's he trying to say?

The author firstly picks up his Bible and uses it to drill into the basic constitution of all people. Drawing upon verses from Genesis 3 and Ephesians 2, he observes that apart from God's supernatural work of grace, we're all spiritually dead. Therefore, the unredeemed cannot not save themselves and don't want to save themselves because they love to sin. Indeed, "the unbeliever's most essential problem is not that they're ignorant, apathetic, or rudderless, but that they've personally, wilfully and happily rebelled against the God who made them".

For this reason sin is not a social label for bad people. It is a word which describes a total alienation from God on account of deliberate rebellion. Rom 3:11 then comes as no surprise, "no one understands; no one seeks for God". We ought not be surprised that people will not seek our church. We do not expect those dead in sin to lob on our front door looking for salvation. Now perhaps there are other reasons why people don't visit us, namely, the broader scourge of sexual abuse ...

... within the church, a church largely unknown in the community, a bad encounter with a Christian person.

But there is also a theological reason why people don't come knocking on our door. Dead people don't come looking for life because ... well ... they're dead. For this reason, churches committed to "attractionalism" often by-pass gospel matters. As the writer says, "Churches committed to attractionalism seek to curry favour among outsiders by highlighting how similar their members are to the world, whereas the Bible ties the church's attractiveness to its distinctness from the world (Mt. 5:16, 1 Pet. 2:12)".

Attractionalism is bad. Attracting unbelievers is good. As Alex Duke goes onto say, "Every church should want to attract unbelievers. In fact, 1 Corinthians 11-14 assumes their presence in our gatherings. Every time a church gathers, unbelievers should not only be welcomed but directly addressed; it should be a "safe place" for them, where their lifestyles will be challenged, not disrespected, where they'll face confrontation, not prejudice.

Every church should desire to be attractive to the unsaved. We seek to be attractive by planning our gatherings with a concern for clarity and intelligibility (1 Cor. 11-14). We seek to be attractive by preaching sermons that offer connections to their worldview (Acts 17). We seek to be attractive by being hospitable (Heb. 13:2) and meeting needs (Matt. 25:35). We seek to be attractive by being people of sincerity, commissioned by God to speak of Christ with confidence that the knowledge of him will be a fragrance of life to some, and death to others (2 Cor. 2:14-17)". And I can add that we seek to be attractive by having a building that is warm, comfortable and fit for purpose.

Our challenge is to be an attractive church without the pitfalls of attractionalism. Let's never be so vain as to think that St Stephen's is about us when it is about the Lord Jesus and his mission in our world.

Mark

"What's On" Matters

- i. Personal details are being updated in preparation for the new **Church Directory**. The list of names is next to the coffee machine. Please correct your details or tick as correct.
- ii. Don't forget **daylight saving** starts next Sunday. Put your clocks forward an hour.
- iii. **Dale and Trish** are on holidays this week. **Mark and Janette** are away the following week.
- iv. **Circus Holiday Club**. 9-11 October from 9.30-12.30pm. Kids K-6 are welcome. Hosted by Oxley Vale Anglican Church. No cost. Enquiries to Tom Magill 0405 846 620.

Prayer Matters

- i. Pray for our **farmers in drought** throughout NSW and QLD, remembering Wayne and Janelle Chaffey, Jamie and Michelle Drury, Angus and Tiffney Faulks.
- ii. Pray that **God sends rain**. We entrust ourselves to the Lord, who in His timing, will cause it to rain.
- iii. Remember **those who are sick**: Wayne and Janelle Chaffey, Nigel Seaton, Rick Noble, Laurie Henry, Margaret Dart.
- iv. Pray for our missionaries **Nathan and Tomoko Stewart, Rick and Kayleen Manton**. Pray that they will be faithful ambassadors where God has placed them.
- v. Pray for our nation and for **all levels of government** facing difficult challenges in a changing world.



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Today after church to
consider the sale of the Moonbi property

CHURCH LUNCH

Following the congregational meeting
Let's pray together, eat together, and encourage one another ... together

Leadership Matters

Last Wednesday your Session met and discussed and/or resolved the following:

- i. Proceed with the live streaming of our Sunday church service
- ii. Resolved to organise in November a congregational planning meeting similar to the previous one held at the Hamilton's place
- iii. Approved leave for Mark to speak at a Scripture Union Leadership Camp 6-10 July at Lake Keepit.
- iv. Resolved to provide quarterly communion to those in our church family unable to attend church.
- v. Prayed for the church family and that God will use us to his glory.