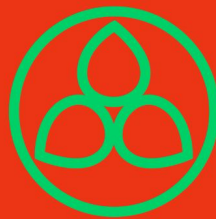




PENTECOST RETREAT



ARNA
Anglican Renewal Network Australia

ARNA PENTECOST PODCAST 2023 *The Holy Spirit and Study*

Today is Monday, June the fifth, and it's the second week of our Pentecost retreat. This week we will focus on the Holy Spirit and study. In particular, we will recognise the role of the Holy Spirit as teacher, opening up truth and wisdom matched by the desire to walk in the pathways of God.

I focus on being drawn into God's Presence

As I still myself to focus on being drawn into God's presence, I'm mindful of the life around me that I too easily overlook, it's complexity and interconnectedness. I recognise the working of God in things that defy my comprehension. Yet I'm reminded that despite my smallness, I still share God's image and likeness.

Psalm 8:3-5

When I observe your heavens,

the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars,

which you set in place,

⁴ what is a human being that you remember him,

a son of man that you look after him?

⁵ You made him little less than God

and crowned him with glory and honour.

And so I pause and pray.

Loving and holy God, you are revealed to us as God in mission, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In this season of Pentecost we praise you for the outpouring of your Spirit to lead us ever deeper into your eternal truth.

May our knowledge of you be always wrapped in the embrace of your grace and love, drawing us to view this world and all who inhabit it as you do. May we be transformed in our minds to lives of trust, loyalty, and devotion, and so renewed in our calling as children of the kingdom.

I Reflect

As we seek to allow the Holy Spirit to enter into our minds, into our thoughts, into our questions, into our observations, we start by surveying the world as we observe it, recognizing the false claims and untruths that cause confusion, anxiety, and foolish choices. This is a spiritually impoverished environment that invariably results in dead ends.

Romans 1: verses 21 and 25

²¹ For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened.

²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen

Those words that ‘though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless and their senseless hearts were darkened’ – such words pierce my complacency.

It's easier to think about that in relation to others and to say, “surely not me!” But I know that to be honest this is no less all too true of myself, that I have substituted false understandings of God over what is true.

I've bought into caricatures and easy pictures. I've tamed and domesticated God, exchanging the truth of God for a lie. It is all too easy to worship someone or something that is in my own image. If that is true of me, then I need to repent, to open myself, to have my understanding of God and of life reshaped.

May I set aside those falsehoods and seek that renewal of the mind so that I would see, not just the world around me more clearly, but also see into the depths of my own heart, the desires of my heart.

I listen

As I seek to hear God through these words of the Apostle Paul in this amazing letter of Romans, I jump ahead to chapter 12.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your reasonable worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

This is a landing point in Paul's argument. This is where he wants to lead us to guide us in Romans 12. All those characteristics that were so devastating and life-denying in Romans chapter one are now reversed through the work of God, revealed in and through the Son and the Holy Spirit. Where chapter one talks about the wrath of God, Paul now speaks of the mercies of God.

Romans 1 revealed the refusal to thank and honour God, with the dishonouring of the body marked by impurity. Through the work of Christ and the agency of the Holy Spirit, this is all now replaced by an urging to offer a sacrifice pleasing to God; the presenting of our bodies to God now marked by holiness. The foolish and idolatrous worship in chapter one is now supplanted by true and reasonable worship; and the former debased mind is now replaced by a profound renewal of the mind.

Life infused by the Spirit is no-longer characterized by the refusal to acknowledge God, but in discernment and obedience, a seeking after and embracing of the will of God. Now that is truly life giving.

I challenge myself

The historian Ashley Null summarizes a profound spiritual insight of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury in the 16th century, responsible for much of our classic Anglican liturgy. Null summarizes Cranmer very helpfully in this succinct summary: “what the heart loves, the will chooses, and the mind justifies” ... “what the heart loves, the will chooses, and the mind justifies.”

True study and knowledge isn't just about abstract thoughts and constructs. It probes deep into the very shape of our minds. Our mind is that which shapes our ambitions, our hopes, our passions. All that makes us choose and find a purpose in life, our sense of identity. May the Holy Spirit enter into the depths of our heart and our minds to re-form back into the image and likeness of God, now powerfully revealed in the image, the mindset, the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray...

I pray with the Apostle Paul, as he prayed for the church in Ephesus:

Ephesians 1:17-19

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength.

Loving and holy God: you are indeed revealed to us as God in mission: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Work within us both wisdom and compassion,
commitment and faithfulness
integrity and obedience.

Renew our hearts and revive our souls;
teach us to live as you lead, in step with your Spirit,
to understand life as you intend it;
that we may love and honour your holy name. Amen.