



**Sunday 27 September 2026 to
Sunday 4 October 2026**



**LUTHERAN
CHURCH**
OF AUSTRALIA

By what authority (outsiders welcome)?

by Peter Bean

Then I will tell you by what authority I do these things (Matthew 21:24b).

Read [Matthew 21:23–32](#)

There is an overall theme in our readings this week of ‘outsiders welcome’!

It begins in today’s reading, with Jesus and the religious leaders clashing over authority. Authority seems to be important. We like to know who is in charge. Political parties make hay out of law and order. We often like black-and-white answers and respond positively to them.

But Jesus is not like this. You want to know my authority? You can’t even answer my simple question. So, I’ll leave the mystery hanging in the air. He then tells a parable that seems to have a simple meaning. Except when Jesus explains it, it challenges all authority.

Who’s getting into the kingdom of God first? Not those who live upright lives, who obey the law. Rather, it is those we don’t want to associate with. The ones we are happy to speak about in bad terms. The ones we would condemn!

Oh, oh! Whose authority counts here? It seems to me that our rules can be dangerous. Those we consider insiders, worthy of respect and law-abiding, are not so highly regarded after all. Instead, the outsiders are welcome: the lowly, the sinners, those who don’t live as we expect, those who respond to unexpected grace.

God’s grace is not based on human authority. Human authority is not Jesus’ guide to life. Rather, it is the gift of grace; the welcome to the outsiders; the welcome to all and any who can put aside their own prejudices and notions of right and wrong, and instead respond to God’s mysterious and wonderful gift of forgiveness and life.

Lord Jesus, thank you for challenging human authority and showing a better way. Help me to respond to your love and mercy, and extend love and mercy to all I come across. Amen.

Spring has sprung. Flowers are displaying their colours; fruit is forming on the trees. There is new growth everywhere. As you observe this wonderful new life, may you revel in the new beginnings God offers you each day. As Peter continues to meander his way through the Book of Psalms, he invites you to read them anew and apply them to your life. If you would like his paraphrase of any psalm (from 1 to 120), send your request to pbean087@gmail.com

Monday 28 September 2026

All the world (outsiders welcome)

by Peter Bean

Let all the world look to me for salvation (Isaiah 45:22a).

Read [Isaiah 45:21-25](#)

If you read this entire passage from Isaiah, you might be struck, as I was, by the allusions to other parts of the Bible.

Isaiah 45:21a reminds me of Isaiah 1:18a: 'Come and let us reason together.' Isaiah 45:21b reminds me of Job 38:4a (worth reading separately as we near the end of the Season of Creation): 'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?'

Isaiah 45:22b echoes a recurring theme throughout Isaiah (e.g. 45:5,6) and the Bible: 'I am the Lord; there is no other God.' Isaiah 45:23b echoes the wonderful statement in Philippians 2:10,11 that every knee will bow and every tongue confess.

Perhaps these are all tied together in the thought expressed in Isaiah 45:22a: 'Let all the world ...!' The God of the Old Testament, alongside the practices of Jesus, seems to have no favourites. Or, putting it more accurately: everyone is a favourite of God.

God, the Creator of all things and the giver of all gifts, looks on each one of us with favour. It's a bit different to how I look at other people when I consider their actions. But God wants all to be saved. This is shown clearly through Jesus' words and actions: he explains love in action through the good Samaritan, the woman at the well, the unclean leper(s) and so on. Jesus lets us know the kingdom is for all who accept God's mercy and grace in their lives.

I wonder whether Isaiah, with the wide scope of his words, anticipated the natural human desire to narrow the scope of the gospel to those who believe in a certain way, or act according to particular laws (of morality?).

But Isaiah declares (remember he is writing to the people in exile here) that God is above all earthly powers, all religious rules, all pious morality, and welcomes all who respond to kindness and justice, mercy and grace.

***Thank you, giver of all good gifts, for the gift of your love and acceptance of me.
Help me to extend these gifts to others. In Jesus' name and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.***

Restoration and comfort (outsiders welcome)

by Peter Bean

I will restore the crushed spirit of the humble ... I will comfort those who mourn (Isaiah 57:15b,18b).

Read [Isaiah 57:14-21](#)

Interesting pictures in this passage. The Holy One lives in a high and holy place (verse 15). Separate, above, distant!

Yet, this Holy One is also very practical and down-to-earth, restoring roads and clearing rocks (verse 14). This Holy One also comforts the humble and revives repentant hearts (verse 15), comforts those who mourn and brings peace and healing (verses 18,19). So, God, from this high and holy place, is also willing to get down into the nitty-gritty parts of life.

This, of course, occurs in the person and presence of Jesus. Jesus comforts those who mourn; he heals many; he often talks to the humble and restores them to places of dignity; he tells people their sins are forgiven when he sees their faith (Matthew 9:2). And he often sends people away with a blessing of peace (Mark 5:34).

God incarnate! The high and holy one, come to earth. God with us, preaching, healing, praying, blessing, encouraging, comforting. Perhaps Isaiah knew something! He was a prophet. Challenging and yet reassuring the people, but also foretelling the One to come, the Christ – the divine One, Jesus – the human One, mixing and living with ordinary people, often those from outside normal circles!

The Holy Spirit is at work here: hovering over God's people as they begin to return from exile; working in the hearts of those who gathered to hear from Jesus in the flesh; encouraging and inspiring us today. The Holy Spirit prepares people to hear the gospel, to live the gospel. And the Holy Spirit does this within and without the confines of official religion!

May you be restored and comforted, not from a distance, but within your heart as the Holy Spirit stirs you to new life. And may you extend that comfort and restoration to anyone 'outside' who does not yet know the grace and blessing of Christ's peace in their lives.

Comforter, Restorer, move and inspire me that I may offer comfort and restoration. Amen.

Get up and go (outsiders welcome)!

by Peter Bean

Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh, and deliver the message I have given you (Jonah 3:2).

Read [Jonah 3:1-10](#)

Jonah was not thrilled about this task. He had already gone in the opposite direction (Jonah 1:3), concluding, I guess, that he knew better than God.

But God was not to be deterred. Despite Jonah's refusal to follow directions, God told him again: GO! Give them a message: a message of destruction; a message of repentance; a message about a second chance (do you get it yet, Jonah?).

Nineveh was a great city; Nineveh was an evil city; Nineveh was not the chosen people or country. Nineveh was a city of outsiders. But Jonah, the messenger of God's judgement and grace, was to go there. Jonah was not impressed with God: not with the instructions he had been given to go, not with God showing grace (Jonah 4:1), not with God teaching Jonah a lesson (Jonah 4:9).

Despite his unhappiness and unwillingness to be this messenger, God worked through him – and in him. Jonah proclaimed the message; the king and the people of Nineveh repented. God showed mercy and grace.

What do I learn from this passage and the Book of Jonah? God works in mysterious ways! God is willing to use unhappy, grumpy people to share his message. God welcomes outsiders.

And God can use you and me – happy or unhappy, joyful or grumpy – to share the good news of grace and kindness, new life and compassion.

How and where is God telling you to go? What is your response?

God, work in me. Even when I am unwilling, let your love flow through me to those I may not consider worthy, but whom you look on with love. Amen.

Thursday 1 October 2026

Full of surprises (outsiders welcome)

by Peter Bean

I tell you, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel (Luke 7:9b).

Read [Luke 7:1-10](#)

We tend to miss so much in this passage! Is it a story about faith, or perhaps lack of faith? Is it about outsiders being welcome or insiders ignoring what is right before them? Is it about Jesus' power to heal, even when not present at the situation?

Note one: the people following Jesus were Jewish elders (verse 9). That is, those who knew the Torah (law), who trusted God, who were the chosen people.

Note two: the officer whose slave is sick does not even meet Jesus. First, the Jewish leaders speak for him. Then his friends bring the message of his understanding of Jesus' power and authority. He knows that Jesus can heal. Perhaps he even knows Jesus is the Son of God; he certainly knows what power Jesus has.

Note three: Jesus speaks these words about faith to the Jewish elders, praising a non-Jew (albeit a friend; verse 4), praising a man who believes even if he can't articulate who or what he believes in.

Note four: the slave is healed. Jesus is not present with the slave. He does not touch the slave or even speak words of healing. He simply expresses his amazement at this Roman officer's faith.

Wow, what do we learn?

Be careful of your religious faith! What is it based on? What does it tell you? How does it help you live?

Know that God, through the life and death of Jesus, is interested in all people – insiders, outsiders, those who can express their faith clearly and those who struggle with what they believe.

Know that Jesus is present, even when he doesn't appear to be. Through the Holy Spirit, he can work in our lives, in my life, how, when and where he wills.

Learn that God is full of surprises. Perhaps the main one being that the gift of grace – to you, to me, to everyone and anyone who acknowledges the power and presence of Jesus, even if in ways not expected.

Jesus, there is so much to learn! Give me faith like this Roman officer, to know you can, and do, make me whole. Let me live in your grace. Amen.

Go ... to the Gentiles (outsiders welcome)

by Peter Bean

Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21b).

Read [Acts 22:1-21](#)

What an amazing conversion story Paul's is! Read it and rejoice.

Paul was proud that he was a Jew. He often mentioned it when defending himself (Acts 22:3; Acts 26:4,5). Naturally, when God converted Paul, Paul wanted to witness to his fellow Jews. But God had bigger plans. Instead, he sent Paul to the Gentiles. If you are familiar with Paul's adventures, you would know he went to many towns across the Roman Empire and wrote many letters to early believers (what we call the epistles).

In these towns, he often spoke in the synagogues, debating with Jewish believers; however, his main task was sharing the revelation about Christ that he had received with non-Jews. And he did it well, starting and encouraging groups of believers in Christ in many places. He is often called the apostle to the Gentiles.

Whatever we think of Paul and his various teachings (often taken out of context today), he demonstrates many of Christ's characteristics.

He proclaims a message of grace – as opposed to living according to the law – and winning God's favour that way. He does not dismiss the law but makes it subservient to the gospel.

He definitely goes to the Gentiles: to Macedonia, to Cyprus, to Ephesus, and many other non-Jewish towns. He engages with all kinds of people, sharing the good news of Christ with whomever he meets. Even though he wished to witness to the Jews he grew up with (and he did at times), his main focus was on the outsiders – those who had not grown up with the understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures that Paul had.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is for us, and we rejoice in that. But it is also for those who are outside our church circles. Will we go, will you go ... to the outsiders? How will you live out the gospel truth of life, hope and grace?

Thank you, Jesus, for life, hope and grace. Thank you for messengers like Paul. I am not like him, but I am still your beloved one. Help me to share this love and life generously and freely. Amen.

Renew us; give us life (outsiders welcome)

by Peter Bean

Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved (Psalm 80:7).

Peter's paraphrase of Psalm 80:7: Renew us, Enabler of Life; your Presence bless us; give us life.

Read [Psalm 80:7-15](#)

This verse occurs three times in Psalm 80: verses 3, 7 and 19. That gives it some importance! The *New Living Translation* translates this verse as: 'Turn us again to yourself, O God ... Make your face shine down upon us.'

God takes the initiative. Whether we are close to God or far away! Whether we are born into a Christian family or come from a different situation! God takes the initiative!

The psalm talks about the various things that God has done for his people. But it also acknowledges that they have slipped away; they have forgotten the provision of life and all its benefits. So the prayer begins with: 'Turn us again to yourself, or renew us; give us life.'

The writer recognises that only God can revitalise us; only God can turn us back; only God can give us life. And how does God do that? By becoming like us!

Ironic, isn't it? We were made like God (Genesis 1:26,27). But to renew us, God becomes like us: The Word became human and made his home among us (John 1:14). The psalmist knows, as God does, that we cannot turn to God on our own. So, God becomes human. Jesus, the Christ, lives among us, experiences human life and begins the work of renewal.

Christ becomes the enabler of life as God's face literally shines on people. God takes the initiative. If you are struggling, looking for hope or feeling lonely, pray for God to be present in your life. Allow the Holy Spirit to turn you to Christ again. And be blessed. And experience life.

God, thank you for becoming like us, so that we could be like you. Renew us; give us life. Amen.

Sunday 4 October 2026

That's ridiculous!

by Kathy Matuschka

Then he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son' (Matthew 21:37).

Read [Matthew 21:33–46](#)

Jesus' parables can be confusing, but this one seems straightforward, at least from our perspective as Christians. There seems to be an obvious, one-to-one correlation between the story as Jesus told it and God's salvation story, as many of us have been taught all our lives.

The vineyard owner (God) established a vineyard complete with a fence and a tower (abundance). When the vineyard was under threat by bad tenants (the Jewish leaders at the time), the owner responded by first sending his servants (prophets), and then eventually his son (Jesus), to restore order (redemption).

But this story isn't just a clever way of tricking the Jewish leaders into judging themselves, so that Jesus can 'one-up' them. It's more than a shrewd response to their challenges to his authority.

This is an announcement – to *all* the powers of this world and beyond – of God's ridiculous rescue plan for this world!

I mean, how ridiculous is it that the owner of the vineyard would send his son when the bad tenants have already killed his servants? Who would do that? A smart landowner would surely send an army and wipe out the opposition once and for all.

That's how ridiculous God's rescue plan was. And still is for us today. But unlike Jesus' parable in our text today, God's rescue story doesn't end with the son being killed. God's Son – our brother, Jesus – willingly became weak and vulnerable, and died ... but then was raised from death. All praise and thanks to God!

Who would think that the creator of the universe, the author of all power, would act like that?

That's ridiculous.

That's love.

***Amazing love! How can it be that you, my God, should die for me (Charles Wesley)?
Amen.***

Kathy is learning to give up her struggle to make sense of God and God's world, and instead rest in the mystery of love that holds her each day.