

8th July 2018

How ridiculous are we, God!

(By Bruce Prewer, in Stan's absence)

How ridiculous we are, God!

Bold with our science, surrounded with electronic gadgets,
yet creatures of abysmal blindness
when it comes to the loving things that ultimately matter.

Please send to our post-modern age that young Jewish healer
who made a salve from common clay
and touched the eyes of the blind.

May his touch enable us see ourselves as creatures
who are made truly made for worship,
community, justice, mercy and peace.

Enable us to treasure our friends and pray for our enemies,
to lovingly serve our neighbours
and to seek first the realm of God.

Through Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen!

... from Brief Prayers for Busy People (October 24)



Science

It's wiser to have faith in love
than put sole trust in science
Those who only trust their eyes
shall rue such blind reliance



The ones who can renew the earth
are those with open mind
where science is a form of prayer
there's hope for humankind

... from Faith's Last Hurrah! (page 157)

15th July 2018

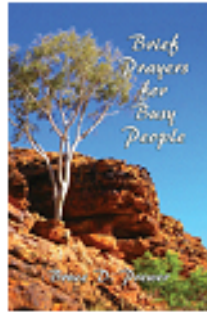
From Bruce Prewer's books

(By Bruce Prewer, in Stan's absence)

Loving God, we come
not because we are good,
but because your name is love;
not because we have the answers to life,
but because you are abundant life.

Be with us in this congregation,
brush us with the breath
of your ever gentle
but eternally strong Spirit.

Recreate within us
all that expresses clearly
your authentic love and life.
For Christ's sake,
Amen!



... from 'Brief Prayers for Busy People' (January 21)

Limerick: For a widow (Mark 12: 41-44)



There was a woman of Zion
with nought but her faith to rely on
as she came to God's house
wealthy fools saw a mouse
but to Jesus she was a lion.

... from 'Faith's Last Hurrah!' (page 76)

22nd July 2018

A Letter to the Churches . . . based on Ephesians 2: 11-22

"Read it again, Papa, pleeeeeeaaase?" Rebecca put on her best pouty face and looked up at her father. He chuckled warmly. "All right, but we only have time to read a little. What part do you want to hear?" he asked. "The part where it says Jesus makes us all bricks" Rebecca said. Her father looked at her, puzzled. "You know, the part about us all being family now."

This was Rebecca's favourite part of the letter, because some of the other children of the church had been teasing her, because she and her father were not Jewish. They were known as Gentiles, and she didn't know many of the old stories that the other children knew. She tried to explain that she and her family had different stories and traditions, but just last week the children had teased her for not knowing the story of Isaiah. She and her little brother had spent many lonely hours playing on their own, feeling different.

Her father rifled through the many pages of the letter to the churches. It had only been a week since the letter came to the church, but already it was making a difference in the way people behaved. They were more

confident, excited about the future. But the best part, at least for Rebecca, is that they were all getting along better.

Rebecca's father cleared his throat and began to read.

"Remember, you all come from different backgrounds, and before you came together in Christ, none of you were living in God's way. You each were lost without God and the hope that God brings to the world.

But now you have all come together in Christ Jesus. You were all far away from God in your own ways, but Jesus has brought you all together, and close to God. Now you are like a big family! It doesn't matter if you are Jews or Gentiles, for when Jesus died, those differences no longer mattered. What matters now is the peace that God brings to us all.

You are all now members of God's family, and Christians everywhere are now citizens of God's household. We are being built together, like a house that has strong and firm foundations; built on the apostles and prophets, and each person is like a brick, with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone that keeps all the other bricks from falling in on each other. Together, we all build the house, we are each important, and together we make a beautiful dwelling place for God.

Rebecca smiled and put her hand in the pocket of her tunic. It was filled with clay marbles. Yesterday, each of the children that had teased her gave her their favourite marble as a way of saying "sorry," and now she had enough to join them in a game. "Thanks, Papa," Rebecca smiled. "I'll be back at dinner; I'm going to go play with my friends."

29th July 2018

Australia's generosity decline

This Sunday's Gospel lection includes a story of Jesus feeding a great crowd of people starting with just one young lad's paltry lunch. It's a story of generosity and abundance. It's a story we find hard to identify with. The data reveals that Australians are becoming less generous, and perhaps less charitable.

As Daisy Dumas writes:

"We are a nation of haves and have-nots, according to SBS's new season of 'Filthy Rich & Homeless'. Putting five of the most well-known and privileged Australians into the shoes of Australia's 116,247 homeless people, the program begs the question: How many of us would swap our lives for even one day of homelessness – and how generous are we, really?"

The truth is, some Australians are more active altruists than others and, overall, we're less giving than once before.

The Charities Aid Foundation 'World Giving Index 2017' illustrates an Australia that is a generous nation, but one that has slipped out of the top five of giving countries overall and has dropped 10%, from 3rd to 9th place, in terms of donating money. Spanning 139 countries and compiled from Gallup data, the British tally finds Australia is not alone – many developed nations' giving has dropped.

Australian Tax Office data reflect a similar decline. Analysis of ATO figures by the QUT Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Non-profit Studies found an 8.9% fall, or \$221 million, in charitable donations in 2015-16 compared to the previous year, the first time the overall amount of giving has dropped since 2009-10. What's more, the number of Australians claiming tax-deductible donations has declined year-on-year since 2010."

The church has always been progressive pioneers in addressing issues of health, education and society. It seems that need remains as strong as ever.
