

way to be rescued from his wrath is to trust in his Son who died for us and was raised as the Lord of all. Idols are the problem, so they cannot be the solution.

But to stop idolatry immediately makes you a traitor. Because your family members will inevitably interpret your 'ceasing and desisting' as a threat to the welfare of the family. Your action will surely offend the gods, and if they are offended, look out! Your conversion is far more than an individual expression of independence—it is perceived as a betrayal.

And the town will respond with the same perception. Your ceasing and desisting from honouring the gods of the town will cause a real and present danger to the whole town. For everyone in the first century world, religion was not a private affair. It couldn't be, if the smiles and frowns of the gods effected your life. To become a follower of Christ was to invite suspicion and hatred. And in many parts of the world, this is still the case today. We in the privatised world of West find it hard to comprehend how difficult it is for our friends from more communal cultures to become Christians. But for them, withdrawing from family devotions, and turning their back on the family shrine on the wall of the lounge room, was to betray their family and their community. It was to bring enormous shame on their family. To refuse to take part in honouring the ancestors endangered the whole family.

Looking across the cultural West, and certainly in Australia, it is starting to feel more like first century Thessalonica. Those who would be loyal to Jesus are finding that we are perceived as threats to the good order of society. We don't endorse every expression of human religion and sexuality, and are thus readily labelled as haters, traitors to the spirit of the age – the cultural zeitgeist. This is not some strange, unknown experience—this is the norm for those who follow Jesus.

So how would Christ have us respond? With tenacious loyalty, gentle love and courageous speech. Tenacious loyalty to Jesus, because the idols of our age (expressive individualism and a curated identity among them) cannot save them or us; only Jesus can save us from the coming wrath. Gentle love, because that is the way of our Lord who was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And courageous speech, telling our families, our friends and our communities (and beyond) that there is only one true and living God, the creator of all, who sent his Son to win forgiveness and life for idolaters. No matter what the pressures to embrace the cultural zeitgeist, the only hope for a lost world is the gospel of Jesus. So be prepared to give an answer to anyone who accuses you of being a traitor, giving the reason for the hope Christ has given you.

Collect

Cleanse our consciences, O Lord, and enlighten our hearts through the daily presence of your Son Jesus Christ, that when he comes in glory to be our judge we may be found undefiled and acceptable in his sight; who live and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.



St Luke's Anglican Church Emerald

Cnr Ruby & Theresa St.

Phone – 4982 1802

Email – emerald@anglicanchurchcq.org.au

Website – stlukesemerald.org.au

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change
[James 1:17]

Ordinary 22 (1st Sept.)

Deuteronomy 4:1-9

Psalms 15

James 1:16-27

Mark 7:1-8, 14-23

Ordinary 23 (8th Sept.)

Isaiah 35:1-10

Psalms 125

James 2:1-17

Mark 7:24-37

Traitors to the Cultural Zeitgeist

In most parts of the world, to be a Christian is to become a traitor to the cultural zeitgeist (the spirit of the times). Almost invariably it includes family, community and sometimes nation. We can get a feel for what is involved from the apostle Paul's description of the conversion of the first Thessalonian converts to Christ:

... you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. (1 Thess. 1:9-10)

They had been idolaters, serving and depending upon idols, living in a town in which idolatry was normal and pervasive. And idolatry wasn't just a Sunday hobby; it was the belief and practice woven deeply into everyday life and culture. The idols were images of the gods that controlled the weather and your health and your wealth. If they did not smile upon you and your family and your town, you faced ruin in every way.

Idolatry was not merely an individual faith: it was a family affair. The family rose or fell together. So the family worshipped together, and set up the family idols so they could show their devotion together. And the town rose or fell together. If worship was stringy or half-hearted, then the chance of the gods being offended increased. And there was nothing so dangerous as offending the gods.

Of course there was always the risk that you unwittingly offended a god out of ignorance. Hence the altar to 'an unknown god' in Athens (Acts 17:23). The trick was to cover all the bases by simply adding one more god to the mix. So can you imagine the effect of becoming a Christian in such a situation? Because a Christian is not someone who simply adds Jesus to their pantheon, but someone who stops serving idols. The way to honour God is to cease and desist from any service of idols. The only

A guide for our prayers during the week

Monday

Our diocese and the gospel

- Bishop Peter
- Other parishes

Tuesday

Our church and the gospel

- Children and youth
- Families
- Seniors
- Kerry and Nancy

Wednesday

Our community and the gospel

- St Luke's Shop
- Blackwater
- Emerald Churches

Thursday

Our nation and the gospel

- Prime minister
- State and local government
- Religious Freedom legislation

Friday

God's world and the gospel

- Islamisation
- War and poverty
- Persecuted Church
- CMS and ABM

Saturday

Ministry and the gospel

- Bible Studies
- Food for Body and Soul
- Wardens and Parish Council
- Rev Daniel and Jenni

Dates to Remember

Today	4 pm service
5 September	Bible study at 5.30 pm – 1 Peter.
7 September	Barra Fishing from 4 pm 'Theresa Downs'
8 September	Food for Body & Soul 5.30 pm
10 September	Parish Council meeting
18-20 October	Synod

	1 September	8 September
Service Leader	Daniel	
Read	Donna, Cate	Cate, Dianne
Prayers	Daniel	
Shop	Wayne, Kayleen	Theresa, Peg
Grounds		

The BCA Prayer

Lord our God, help us to remember those who live in isolated and remote parts of our land. We ask you to strengthen and encourage all whose ministries are supported by The Bush Church Aid Society.

Refresh them in times of discouragement and loneliness and call others to stand with them in the task of making Christ known.

Grant that, through the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, through caring service and by support for young people, the message of your redeeming love may be proclaimed and accepted by the people of our land. We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

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