

Firstly, we hold out a real encounter with God. The answer to our disenchanted world isn't a disenchanted church. Unfortunately, this was the approach of theological liberalism in the 19th and 20th centuries. H. Richard Niebuhr famously summed up the result: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross." But lest we pick on theological liberals, we should note the pragmatic turn among many conservative evangelicals in the last century, where the supernatural was downplayed in favour of whatever seemed most practical, giving the impression of a manageable, predictable God who affirms us in our deep desires, offers a sprinkle of transcendence, and blesses all our endeavours. In some cases, the gospel was instrumentalized for political purposes. Churches that still held to orthodox teaching about God and his revelation resembled little more than voluntary associations for social activism, either culture warriors for the right or errand runners for the left.

In contrast to these approaches, the church must remember that what we hold out to the world, more than anything else, isn't a program for better living, good advice for financial gain, a healthy approach to raising children, a moral anchor for the world, or a socially active plan to make the world a better place or eradicate injustice. Christians may be involved in all these efforts and more, but the one non-negotiable element is this: the church holds out a real encounter with a real God. Our purpose isn't to share something that works *for us* but to summon the world to worship the only true and living God.

At the centre of the Christian faith is not personal experience but divine revelation. God has made himself known in the world. And yet, because this revelation is real, it issues forth in powerful personal experiences, whereby we find ourselves by losing ourselves in the worship of God. We cannot truly worship a god who always affirms our desires and approves of our actions; a god like that is the equivalent of a smarmy acquaintance who does nothing but flatter and ingratiate and thus has no real value. But the real God, the God we see in Scripture, has broken into our world and extended himself in real relationship. This is the God we must present to the world.

And the world needs a church that can be a prophet, not just a chaplain to a declining culture: A church filled with confidence that God is real and has revealed himself. A church that unmask the attempt to find fullness only in immanent sources instead of transcendent ones. A church that cares about Scripture and doctrine because we've encountered the true and living God and want to worship him rightly. The church's main goal isn't workability but worship.



St Luke's Anglican Church Emerald

Cnr Ruby & Theresa St.

Phone – 4982 1802

Email – emerald@anglicanchurchcq.org.au

Website – stlukesemerald.org.au

Of Jesus many said, 'What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands?' [Mark 6.2]

Ordinary 14 (7^h July)

2 Samuel 5:1-10

Psalms 48

2 Corinthians 12:2-10

Mark 6:1-13

Ordinary 15 (14^h July)

Amos 7:7-15

Psalms 85:8-13

1 Corinthians 16:13-21

John 17:6-19

Navigating the Challenge of Privatized Religion [Part 1]

JUNE 21, 2024 **TREVIN WAX**

When you overhear conversations that touch on something spiritual, you'll often hear two words come up: "For me." They rush in as soon as the discussion turns toward claims about truth and falsehood: "*For me*, there is a God, and believing in God just feels right." Or, "In my experience, *for me*, Jesus is the best path to God." The introduction of those two words personalizes and relativizes what's being said.

It's not necessarily wrong to personalize and relativize an issue. But when the conversation shifts to God's existence, Christ's claims, or the gospel's truth, adding "for me" can be problematic. When we're in the realm of truth and falsehood, orthodoxy and heresy, sin and righteousness, we're not merely making a claim that's true for us; we're saying something real about the world. Those two words spoken in the wrong way at the wrong time soften a truth claim and make it only a matter of personal belief.

When we talk about Jesus or share the gospel, most people today will assume we're talking about a private, personalized faith, as if we're asking them to adopt the same hobby. I'm just speaking "my" truth or sharing about the religious identity that works "for me." However, true evangelism goes further, announcing the good news that cannot be reduced to personal preference or private spirituality; it confronts the listener with a choice, and that confrontation presents a challenge in sharing the gospel.

It is important therefore that we navigate the challenges of a privatized religion and recognise the several factors that must influence our mission and evangelism.

A guide for our prayers during the week

Monday

Our diocese and the gospel

- Bishop Peter
- Other parishes
- Dean for Cathedral – Rev. Ross Nicholson

Tuesday

Our church and the gospel

- Children and youth
- Families
- Seniors
- Chris

Wednesday

Our community and the gospel

- St Luke's Op 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

Dates to Remember

10 July	CWCI, Coffee & Nibbles evening, contact Dawn 0400 706 286
13 July	Working Bee from 8 am
20 July	Garage sale from 8 am
27 July	Lay Ministers Retreat – R'ton 1 pm
3 August	Barra Fishing from 2 pm

	7 July	14 July
Service Leader	Donna	Larry
Read		Donna, Natalie
Prayers	Donna	Dianne
Shop	Donna	Peg, Therese
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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