

Reflection 20 July 2025

An incredible offer

(Colossians 1:15-29)

*May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Amen*

Carolyn's reflection last Sunday focused on the messages of Passion, Compassion and Joy, which are all present at the beginning of the letter that Paul wrote to the Church in Colossae. Paul wrote to the Colossians that "*we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven*" and he hoped "*that (they) may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that (they) may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as (they bore) fruit in every good work and as (they grew) in the knowledge of God.*"

Carolyn reminded us that the Passion that we have for God's Kingdom can be lived out actively in the Compassion that we have for one another – for the children of God (whatever church or faith community they are members of or indeed if they are members of none). And she challenged us to have this Passion for the Kingdom and Compassion for God's people while remaining Joyful.

Maybe that was the "What and the How": What? Joyful Passion for the Kingdom! How? Through Joyful Compassion for the children of God!

Hmmm ... Without wanting to be (too) subversive – I need to begin this reflection by asking another question ... Why? Ok, we are in church and that sounds like a nice, church-y thing to do ... but that isn't really good enough, is it?

I mentioned in the Bulletin this week that I think Paul can be difficult to understand – maybe partly because he writes in the first person, while at the same time delving into theological depths. Probably partly because he wrote 2000 years ago ... But there is an additional challenge for me here – Paul doesn't seem to deal with things in the order I would deal with them. Here he seems to start with the 'what' and the 'how' before tackling the 'why' ... Why do we need to have Joyful Passion for the Kingdom and for the children of God?

Paul only gets to this "why" from verse 15 ...

But before we get to Paul, I'd like to start with a job ad from a few years back: (change slide)

"The Best Job in the World – Island Caretaker Great Barrier Reef

About the job

Tourism Queensland is seeking applicants for the best job in the world! The role of Island Caretaker is a six-month contract, based on luxurious Hamilton Island in the Great Barrier Reef. It's a live-in position with flexible working hours and key responsibilities include exploring the islands of the Great Barrier Reef to discover what the area has to offer...

About the job package

Living above the Great Barrier Reef is a pretty unique benefit, but the successful candidate will also be paid a salary package of AUD \$150,000 for the six-month contract. You'll receive return airfares from your nearest capital city (in your home country), accommodation and transport on Hamilton Island, travel insurance for the contract period, computer ...

How to apply

Step 1: Create a video application (in English and in 60 seconds or less) telling us why you're the best person for the job and demonstrating your knowledge of the Islands of the Great Barrier Reef.

Step 2: Fill out a brief application form and upload your video to www.islandreefjob.com."

It sounds to me like the coolest place in the world offering the coolest job in the world. And the application process doesn't seem too taxing ... you just have to do it! It is an incredible offer. And there are parallels with our reading ...

1. That CV

My reflection in the bulletin this week focused on Jesus' amazing Curriculum Vitae – maybe something that we have got into the habit of glossing over.

Paul describes Christ not merely as a teacher, healer, or even as the son of God—but as the one through whom the entire universe was born and in whom it holds together.

He declares that Christ is "the image of the invisible God"—that is in Christ, we see God's very nature, fully revealed.

Furthermore "All things have been created through Him and for Him."

He proclaims that everything—*everything*—finds its source and purpose in Christ:

- The stars above us,
- The oceans and forests,
- The systems of life and breath and growth,
- The unseen forces of gravity and energy,
- And yes, even the complexity of human hearts and relationships.

In our contemporary world, we often speak of stewardship, of caring for the planet, of living sustainably. But here, we're given an even deeper truth—creation itself is not just something we use or are required to steward; it is something that finds its very life in Christ. The earth, the cosmos, everything around us—it is sacred, because it is in Christ and for Christ. And Christ is “the image of the invisible God ...(in whom) ... all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell”.

And Paul doesn't stop with the natural world. He moves swiftly from the cosmos to the Church: “He is the head of the body, the church.” Jesus is the head of this church family. This Church which is not merely a human institution or a gathering of like-minded people—but is Christ's Body. He is its head, its source of wisdom, its very heartbeat.

So we discover that Christ is not distant or detached from our human life. He is intimately involved in world and in our communities of faith. Not something to be glossed over ...

This all sounds amazing – just like Hamilton Island on the Great Barrier Reef.

And what is it that the one of the amazing CV has come to do?

2. The incredible offer

It is really very simple: having gone to great lengths to describe Jesus Christ – “*the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; the one in whom all things in heaven and on earth were created,*” etc ... Paul explains that Christ reconciled us to God – made the connection between us and God possible: “*through (Jesus) God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.*” Through Jesus, we have the possibility of being holy and blameless and irreproachable when we come to stand before God.

An incredible offer - Think not too taxing job at amazing conditions in an amazing location ...

3. The condition ...

But there is a condition ... Now that is scary isn't it? I had the privilege of being able to debate with Carolyn about this.

Because on the one hand God's love is universal. Paul says that the offer is made to *"every creature under heaven"* ... and yet on the other hand Paul says *"provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard ..."*

This means that we have to be there. We have to receive Jesus' incredible offer by faith – a simple faith in the offer made to every creature under heaven.

This is as simple as it is difficult – just like the job. But as soon as we are given something simple, we overthink and add to it. "Unwittingly, we add to the doctrine of salvation through "Jesus plus": Jesus plus the right Bible translation. Jesus plus a certain method. Jesus plus the right political persuasion. Jesus plus the right church and the right denomination. 'Jesus plus' was a struggle for the church in first century Colossae too. To them, the right rituals were just as important as the right Saviour. Paul reminds them - and us - of the centrality of Jesus Christ as the image of the invisible God. The gospel is nothing unless it is based on Christ alone. This means Christ must be central in how we do family, how we work, and how we live out our faith with one another.¹"

The pressure of the third piece of the puzzle – of the connector – of our responsibility - is heightened by the enormity of Jesus' CV, and the enormity of the offer. That incredible offer Jesus came to earth to make, that is reconciling us to God, sorting us out so we can stand before God. All this is ours If we only keep the faith.

Let me repeat – that doesn't mean going to church, or being an Anglican, or anything else of our making. Keeping the faith is about an utter reliance on God's love and His unconditional commitment to us in and through Christ – rather than about us needing to behave in a certain way.

But it also doesn't mean nothing.

It is about a whole-hearted faith with God at the centre – and Christ's redeeming work as the basis of all we are and do... to inspire our Passion and our Compassion.

Paul tells us that this is his ministry – this is what he dedicated his life to achieving, one person at a time: ensuring that everyone Paul came into contact with was taught about Jesus and His incredible offer ... and the question is 'how will they and we respond'.

¹ Danny Sugimoto

This is the “Why” to Carolyn’s “What” – we are called to have a passion for the Kingdom of God and compassion for God’s children because of who Jesus is and because of that incredible offer - what He offers to do for us ... if only we keep the simple faith, seek to walk His way “without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard”, becoming and remaining “mature in Christ”.

4. Takeaway?

It is an incredible offer:

1. Jesus Christ is everything. He is God. And He died a horrible death on the cross to bring us back to God, to make it possible for us to stand in peace before God - holy and blameless and irreproachable.
2. To take up this offer, we need to “continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that (we) heard”. We need a whole-hearted faith with God at the centre – and Christ’s redeeming work as the basis of all we are and do.

The Nicene Creed that we will say together in a moment echoes Paul’s letter. It reminds us to stay rooted – focused - on Christ as both fully divine and fully human. Christ, the Lord of Creation, not just of our church. Without additions, without interpretations. The image of the invisible God.

Amen