

This month of June is significant – for on 17 June 1703 John Wesley was born. John once told a friend that his experience could be found in the following lines from the hymn: “O Thou who camest from above” and in answer to another question he added the third verse of that hymn: “Jesus confirm my heart’s desire” (Hymn 572 TiS). In his last days John was heard to sing between breaths: “I’ll praise my maker while I’ve breath” (Hymn 90 TiS).

John Bohler, a leader of the Moravian group, was reported as having said, “Had I a thousand tongues, I’d praise Christ with them all”. Those words prompted Charles to write for the anniversary of his conversion the hymn “O for a thousand tongues to sing My great redeemer’s praise” (Hymn 210 TiS).

If you have a hymn book at home, turn to these hymns and join the Wesleys in singing them. Enjoy the significance of these hymns for these two great Christian leaders.

Closing Prayer

A prayer to conclude today’s worship is also the hymn that tells of the personal experience of today’s message writer (Hymn 602 TiS)

O Love that wilt not let me go
I rest my weary soul in thee.
I give thee back the life I owe
that in thine ocean depths its flow
may richer, fuller be.



Close today’s reflection with the Lord’s Prayer.

Thank you to Brian Turrell for preparing today’s reflection.



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Church in a Bag
Sunday 14 June

Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering

O God of love, we come in the quiet of this time in our own homes to turn our thoughts to you and to reflect on your teachings ... to focus on what it means to follow and to practise what Jesus taught and lived. So our prayer this morning is from the hymn:

Breathe on me, breath of God
Fill me with life anew
That I may love all that you love
And do what you would do.
Amen



Preparation

You, O God, have spoken to us through your prophets, through Christ Jesus, through his apostles, and through countless numbers of people over the past 2000 years. Our prayer is that the message today will help us focus on the qualities lived out by those who have gone before us; who have witnessed to the life and teachings of Jesus; who have made a difference to the lives of others. And so we give thanks for their example and dedication to preaching the Gospel. This morning, as we read from Matthew’s Gospel of how Jesus commissioned his disciples to go and preach and heal, and of Paul’s message to Christ’s followers in Rome and how the Wesleys were transformed by Paul’s message and how they went out to preach and transform lives, may our eyes and hearts and minds be opened to receive this message and be challenged to follow. **Amen**

Reading: Matthew 9:35 – 10:8

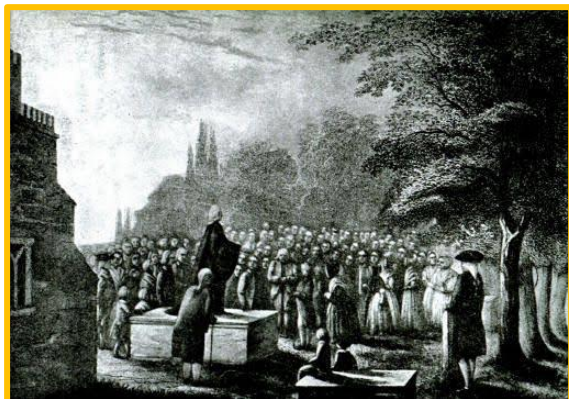
Matthew's reading begins with Jesus visiting all the towns and villages, preaching and healing. He then commissioned his 12 disciples to go preach and heal the sick. The commentary in *With Love To The World* (WLTTW) states, "Jesus' ministry is a passionate response to human need, and is also one of active restoration and wholeness". The message is to go and meet the needs of the people. In the next reading from Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome, we read of how Paul's message led to the transformation of John and Charles Wesley, and how they went out to towns and villages across England bringing healing and wholeness.

Reading: Romans 5:1–8

Verse 8 reads "But God has shown us how much he loves us ... it was while we were yet sinners that Christ died for us".

This letter of Paul's to the Christians in Rome, and the words of verse 8 were responsible for changing the lives of John and Charles Wesley and England in the 18th century: a time in which England struggled with the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution.

John and Charles Wesley followed their father into the Anglican ministry. In 1735 they went to the colony of Georgia in America to preach the Gospel to the settlers and the indigenous people. After two years they returned dissatisfied and disillusioned. However, on their journey to America, John met a German group, Moravians, who displayed such enthusiasm for their faith, that on his return to England, John attended a Moravian Bible group. In the reading of an introduction to Romans, John Wesley felt "his heart strangely warmed". He came to realise "I did trust in Christ, in Christ alone, for salvation; and an



assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins ...". The day of 24 May 1738 was a memorable day for John, and Charles had had a similar experience only a few days earlier.

Now with a new faith and conviction, John and Charles Wesley took to the highways, preaching the Gospel to the people in the open and writing hymns. Their preaching and their hymns helped lift the spirit of the people whose lives had been uprooted by the Industrial Revolution as they searched for work. History records how their preaching had a great impact on the morale and morality of England. Drunkenness and gambling were rampant. The Wesleys' insistence on personal behaviour – no gambling, no alcohol – insistence on keeping the Sabbath all played their part in helping lift standards of behaviour. They organised a free school for children, a shelter for widows, and preached that all people were loved by God.

So, this letter of Paul's and its influence on the Wesleys was responsible for the great Christian movement of Methodism, and for an emphasis on not just preaching the Gospel, but also on social issues, social justice and concern for people that saved England in the 18th century. One historian went so far as to make the claim that the Wesleys saved England from a revolution like those that were occurring in a number of European countries in mid-18th century.

In WLTTW the writer in his commentary on Romans stated: "Paul presents his case convincingly and in such a way that it continues to change lives today. However, while Paul's rhetoric still appeals to many, others struggle. Paul wrote to address people of his own time. Our task is to grasp the essential, quite remarkable truth of what is being said here ... and articulate clearly in the language of our day to the people of our day".

So, what is the essential message for today? Surely it is that Christ lived and died to demonstrate the power of LOVE. Love that stresses sharing, caring, compassion. Love that stresses tolerance and acceptance of all, irrespective of race, colour, gender, beliefs, nationality ... rather than the message of personal salvation that Paul saw as essential for the people of his day. Agree or disagree, but the message for humanity today has to be for Christ-like love.