

Diocese of Willochra

SERMON OUTLINES

These sermon outlines are prepared for Pastoral Assistants in the Diocese of Willochra who are licensed to preach in their congregations.

If you have been reading or adapting sermons written by others for some time, you may be ready to take the next step in preparing your own sermon from an outline.

The outlines are designed so that you can elaborate on the simple structure provided. You can add details from the Bible readings, introduce your own ideas, and localize any examples so that they are meaningful for your own congregation.

Only one copy is sent to each congregation. Please share them among those who need them. If you have internet access they can be downloaded from www.diowillochra.org.au/ministry-development/resources/sermon-outlines or in a PDF file from the Downloads page.

Please give me feedback about the usefulness of these outlines so that you get the support you want to develop as a preacher.

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SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

3 July, 2005

1. **Yokes are always associated with beasts of burden.** Bullock drays were essential to the economy of Australia pulling loads to shipping or rail-heads. They are still used in Asia. We associate them with heavy burdens, harsh treatment, and limited freedom.

2. **How surprising then for Jesus to use 'yoke' as a metaphor!** (Matt. 11.28-30) It's almost a contradiction to say that a yoke is easy and a burden light. Romans 7.14-25 gives a tongue-twisting explanation of the yoke of sin which we all bear. If we are yoked to sin we go where we do not want. Our path is set for us, we cannot turn because the yoke keeps us restrained. The burden of sin is heavy and it leads to wretchedness.

3. **But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** Paul in Romans 7.14-25 and 8.1-2 reminds us that we have been set free from the yoke of sin and death. The yoke of the Spirit offers freedom. In Matt 11.15-27 Jesus speaks confidently of his Sonship through whom the Father is revealed. His yoke is revolutionary. It is light and there will be no heavy burdens. It seems that only those whose ears are attuned to him, only the innocent, those like children, those who trust with simplicity, are able to accept confidently the 'yoke' which he offers.

4. **Being forgiven and freed from sin is a joy; Christian ministry, serving and loving others is a joy.** The joy and peace we gain from our being yoked to Jesus needs to be visible to others. It doesn't help to be whingers and complainers. Cf the Gen. 24 story: Rebekkah offered willingly and ungrudgingly to water Laban's 10 camels. (Camels drink gallons and gallons and Rebekkah had to pull it all up from the well). This yoke of service is an enigma. It is not burdensome to do good, and to serve others; it is a privilege and a joy. Christians who are yoked to Christ will be joyful, generous, willing and uncomplaining.

5. **How does this apply in your own life and in the life of the parish?** Are you a joyful Christian? What attitudes do you have about your Christian life and your ministry? Is your worship thankful, praising and joyful? Do you enjoy your service to the community or do you resent it? What kind of yoke do you wear?

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

31 July, 2005

1. **Consumerism is rife in our society.** Advertisements often seem to convince us that true happiness will come with owning certain objects, traveling to certain places, living in certain areas, etc. Some people always seem to be on a search for happiness and have tried various means of gaining it. There's a whole industry of seminars directed at How to Find Happiness or How to be Successful.

2. **This search for happiness is not a recent thing.** Isaiah 55.1-5 speaks of God's recognition of the helplessness of his people searching for satisfaction. God knows that satisfaction is not from food or work alone. At our deepest level there is a spiritual yearning which only God can satisfy. The feeding of the 5000 is an enacted parable of this.

3. **Imagine Jesus** – imagine how he felt when he heard of the death of John the Baptist (link with last week). Distraught, he withdrew to the desert, only to be followed by people craving to be with him (Matthew 14.13-21). Instead of being annoyed he saw the crowd and had compassion on them and cured their sick cf. Mark 6.34 “he began to teach them”. He recognized their spiritual needs and their physical needs. He gave to them abundantly - so much so that there was even food left over.

4. **This event is a kind of parable of the Kingdom of God.** Despite his own need to grieve and recover from John's tragic death, Jesus put them first. They had followed him in need of security, comfort and reassurance; they were sick in body and mind and physically hungry. Jesus offered all this to them and in the miracle of the bread and fish a promise of abundance.

5. **The crowd knew their need and sought him out.** Jesus shows us quite literally God at work, willingly supplying comfort and food to those in need. May we, like the crowd, recognize that only God can satisfy our yearnings and seek him out.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

10 July, 2005

1. **The church is not flourishing in the western world,** but the growth of the church in Asia, South America and Africa is amazing. We fail to attract young people and suffer many frustrations in our ministry. People don't seem to want to hear the word of God's kingdom.

2. **Probably Jesus' original parable finished at v.9** with the punchline – an assurance of the abundant success of the kingdom despite failures and frustrations in the church. (In those days a yield of 7½ fold was average. Jesus deliberately exaggerates – 100fold, 60fold, 30fold . Modern farming yields may have lessened the impact of this parable!).

3. **Maybe you have always been encouraged to apply this parable to yourself:** are you like the path, the rocky ground, thorns, good soil? This is a legitimate reading of the parable and is supported by Romans 8.1-11 Those whose minds are set on the Spirit will be fertile ground for the Word to grow and flourish.

4. **Also, we can read it as an encouragement to us as sowers.** Put yourself or your congregation in the picture as a sower of the word. How do you broadcast the Word in your community. Are you being lavish in your seeding? Where does the grain fall? Some is wasted, some is choked, some doesn't thrive, but perhaps there is some which does root and grow and bear a crop. The wasted seed is more than compensated by the crop from the seeds which fall on good soil.

5. **Isaiah 55.10-11 is a prototype of the parable;** nature provides a parallel for the working of God in the world. Take heart from the prophet and the parable. God's kingdom will not fail. There will be failures and frustrations in the Church but God's kingdom will flourish. 'Yours is the kingdom for ever and ever.'

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

17 July, 2005

1. **Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 show God as patient and forbearing**, “Separating the wheat from the tares”, is a common enough phrase. Yet this is not something for us to do. All in God’s good time will judgment be made about “good” and “bad”. God is patient and forbearing, slow to judge, and persistent till the end when the truth will be revealed. Patient and forbearing do not mean weak and accepting. Judgment is his prerogative.
2. **What did the parable mean for Jesus?** Jesus lived among critical people; the Pharisees regarded themselves as righteous and criticized Jesus for socializing with outcasts. Jesus knew that God would separate people at the great day of judgment. In the meantime, side by side there will be good and bad living together. For the early Christian community the parable was a reassurance that God would recognize the righteous, who need to persevere with their faith although amongst them will be people who are ‘weeds’.
3. **The parable of the mustard seed and the yeast give encouragement.** From small beginnings the kingdom of God will triumph and encompass large numbers; the kingdom of God is hard to see, like yeast hidden in the flour, but it will do its work. Again the major point is the patience and forbearance of God, who is prepared to wait for the growth that will come in time. God is gracious and compassionate: slow to anger, full of goodness and truth” Ps. 86:15 The truth may be hidden from us now but it will be revealed at the end.
4. **It can be hard to see God at work in the world.** Where is the kingdom, the reign of God, in a world of tsunami and earthquake, famine and war, crime and hatred? In a world where success is judged by money, career, and social status.”, where evil and self-seeking seem to prosper...the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God” for release from the bondage of death. (Romans 8:12-25)
5. **We pray today for pure hearts and constant wills to worship God in spirit and in truth.** (Collect) Worship is all we do to give honour and worth to God; it requires from us patience and forbearance knowing that God will finally judge us. May we be the productive wheat of his field.

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

24 July, 2005

1. **Usually parents take a great deal of trouble to choose the right name for their child.** (perhaps give some examples from your own experience. To the Jews a name was closely related to the character and nature of the bearer. Isaiah 49:1 and Psalm 139:1-11 both emphasise this. John means ‘God’s gracious gift and can be understood as an appropriate name for ageing parents to give. But the neighbours think there is more to it than that after all angel messenger, Elizabeth’s age, departure from family tradition, Zechariah’s muteness and recovery all point to the extraordinary.
2. **John appeared as a mission preacher** on the banks of the Jordan demanding repentance and baptism from his hearers in view of the approach of the Kingdom of God. His dress and diet are reminiscent of OT prophets though some of his preaching foreshadowed Christ’s. Large crowds were attracted to him and Jesus himself was baptized by him. He recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah and willingly accepted the fact that his own influence must decline as Jesus’ ministry increased. His denunciation of Herod Antipas for his marriage led to his imprisonment and beheading
3. **John’s disciples** were loyal to him long after his death (see Acts 18:25). He is highly revered by the Mandaeans who just possibly have some remote connexion with John the Baptist’s original disciples. (Some Mandaeans from Iran and Iraq have sought refuge in Australia because of Muslim persecution). We Christians hold him in such high esteem because he was the forerunner, the one who pointed the way to Jesus: he spoke of the coming of the Kingdom; he baptized Jesus; he bore witness to Jesus as the Messiah.
4. **We call him St John because of these things.** He is a model of the servant leader. He was apparently an awesome figure and a fiery preacher. Crowds from the city made their pilgrimage to hear him and to be baptized by him. But he was sure of his vocation to point the way to the Messiah. He had the power to draw people to himself but he was self-sacrificing and knew that he was to point people in a new direction.
5. **We learn from the saints and we can model our lives and ministry on John.** May we too be less concerned about our own popularity, but rather concerned as a church to prepare the path for people to meet Jesus, and to point people in Jesus’ direction.