

TERM 4

2023

THE
TRUTH
IS...

SEVEN GOSPEL REALITIES
THAT COMPEL A
RESPONSE

TERM DATES

(see printed *July-December 2023 calendar* for full list of dates)

Monday 18 October

Morning Prayer (Online)

Wednesday 25 October
(Repeated on Thursday 26)

Sam Alberry Combined Night
@ Bridge Church

Saturday 4 November

Day of Prayer

**Friday 3 —
Sunday 5 November**

Square One Kids' Camp

**Friday 10 —
Sunday 26 November**

Joy Through Toys Drive

Saturday 11 November

Women's Breakfast

Wednesday 15 November

Morning Prayer (Online)

Tuesday 21 November

SRE Christmas Assemblies

Wednesday 22 November

Fellowship Lunch

Saturday 25 November

Gingerbread House Christmas Outreach

Wednesday 6 December

Whole Church Prayer Meeting

Sunday 10 December

5pm Family Meal

Sunday 17 December

8 & 10am Christmas Communion Services
5pm Carols & Readings Service

**Sunday 24 December
Monday 25 December**

Christmas Eve & Christmas Day Services

Sunday 31 December

Combined New Years' Eve Service (10am)

THE *TRUTH* IS...

It is not uncommon in casual conversation to start our sentences with little phrases like “*to be honest...*”, or “*the truth is...*” Normally, we use such phrases when we’re trying to make a serious point, or bringing our line of argument to a conclusion. Whatever we have said up to this point might have been a bit of pleasant banter, but “to be honest...” means I’m being serious with what I say next. I might have been meandering a little in my speech so far, but “the truth is...” means I am speaking as plainly as I can.

For our final term of the year at St Mark’s, our series will build upon this phrase “the truth is...” We’re going to look at 7 gospel truths that demand or compel a response from us. They might be truths about God and the gospel, or about us and the mission he has entrusted to our care. They are central truths to our life together, which clamour for a response from us, both as individuals and as a church family. Having already studied Matthew’s Gospel, Paul’s correspondence with the Thessalonians, the Old Testament epic of Exodus (and the neat little prophecy from Habakkuk), this topical series will be a punchy end to our year, before we get ready for Christmas in December.

Part of the point of doing a series like this is to help us close the gap between what we say we believe and how we live out those beliefs at ground level. So we hope and pray that you will be challenged and inspired as we ponder some of the foundations of our faith, via that little phrase, “the truth is...”

Grace and peace.

STUDY PLAN

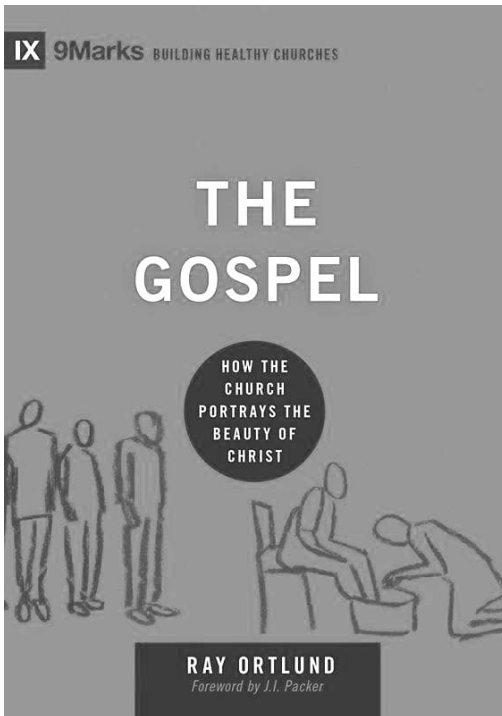
These small group studies are designed to be used in conjunction with the Sunday sermon series. You can use them to precede or follow the Sunday message (the benefit of using them after the Sunday message is that you can focus on application rather than discovery).

The timetable below is a possible program for group study:

| Sunday Sermon Date | Group study | Title | Main passage |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|---|----------------------|
| 15 October | 16-19 October | The truth is... the gospel is demanding. | Mark 8:22-38 |
| 22 October | 23-26 October | The truth is... God is good. | Exodus 33:12-34:9 |
| 29 October | 30 October to 2 November | The truth is... people are lost without Jesus. | Acts 4:1-31 |
| 5 November | 6-9 November | The truth is... church is family. | Mark 3:13-35 |
| 12 November | 13-16 November | The truth is... all we have belongs to God. | 1 Timothy 6:6-19 |
| 19 November | 20-23 November | The truth is... God answers prayer. | Matthew 7:7-11 |
| 26 November | 27-30 November | The truth is... God has given spiritual gifts. | Romans 12:1-8 |

Advent series: 3, 10, 17 December

FURTHER RESOURCES

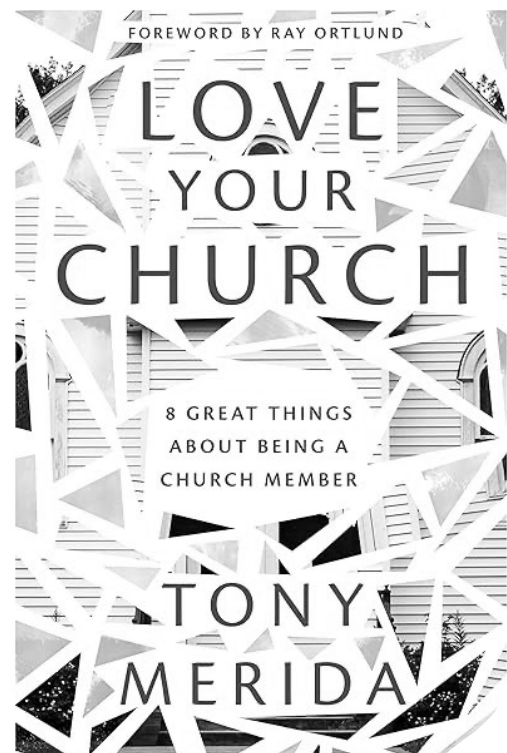


How does the church portray the beauty of Christ? The gospel is a theological message; but this message also creates human beauty - beautiful relationships in our churches, making the glory of Christ visible in the world today.

In this book, Ray Ortlund makes the case that gospel doctrine creates a gospel culture. That is, when the gospel is allowed to exert its full power, a church becomes radiant with the glory of Christ.

Jesus did not come into this world merely to start a new community. He came to start a new kind of community. In a world of brutality and ugliness, Jesus gave his very lifeblood to start a community set apart by beauty—his own beauty.

Love Your Church will remind you of how wonderful it is to belong to God's family and be a part of his amazing witness to both the earthly and the heavenly realms. It will help you grow in your love for and commitment to our local church.



START

What kind of achievements make people really famous, across the world and over decades or centuries? Think of three people who are as famous (or nearly as famous) as Jesus, and write down their single most important achievement:

| Name | Achievement |
|------|-------------|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |

What does the average person consider to be Jesus' greatest achievement (you can tick a few boxes or rank the whole lot in order of importance)

- his moral teaching
- his historical significance
- his cultural influence
- his example of sacrificial love
- his creation of a new religion/revolution
- other:

READ MARK 8:22-38

and share your first thoughts.

THINK & TALK

1. Everyone has an opinion about Jesus, just like the people in Jesus' day. But Peter correctly identifies Jesus as the Christ. Who or what is the Christ, and what does this passage say about the Christ?

2. Why is Jesus' death such an important part of his mission (see Isaiah 53:4-6, Mark 10:45, Colossians 1:19-20 or 1 Peter 3:18, for example) and how does that help us to understand our role as his followers?

3. In v.34–38 Jesus spells out what it means to be one of his followers. Circle the answers below that match up to what Jesus says his followers must do in v.34; what do each of your circled answers really mean?

Take life easy

Try your best to be good

Go to church

Deny yourself

Treat others as you'd want to be treated

Follow him

Take up your cross

Become a minister

Keep your sin to a bare minimum Read your bible, pray, evangelise

4. Does v.35–38 describe belief in the gospel in positive terms or negative terms? Does this description energise you or terrify you?

5. How do the passages below give us a full understanding of the gospel?
- Romans 4:4-5:
 - Colossians 2:13-14:
 - Titus 3:4-7:
6. Generally speaking, action follows belief. If the gospel is true, how does believing it shape our identity and our destiny?
7. Read Luke 14:25-35, where Jesus again radically defines what it looks like to follow him, by painting three pictures of what whole-hearted belief looks like. What point is he trying to teach with each word-picture, and how do they encourage us to follow Jesus more fully?

“Whoever wants to
be my disciple must
deny themselves
and take up their
cross and
follow me.”

MARK 8:34

START

Good is a pretty basic word, but how would you define good? What are some of the good things in your life?

READ EXODUS 33:12-34:14

and share some of your initial impressions of the text.

THINK & TALK

1. Exodus 34:6-7 is a famous passage about the character of God; how does the context of the passage help us understand those verses?
2. What do each of the phrases in v.6, 7 actually mean? What does it imply that God maintains love to thousands, but punishes to the third and fourth generations?
 - Compassionate:
 - Gracious:
 - Slow to anger:
 - Abounding in love and faithfulness:

3. Why do you think Exodus 34:6-7 is an ideal passage to refer to the goodness of God? See also Exodus 33:19.

4. How does Moses' response to God's revelation of his goodness in v.6-7 guide our response to God's goodness?

5. These verses became the Old Testament's working definition of God (see Psalms 86:15, 103:8, 145:8, Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2). How do we see this comprehensive description of the goodness of God in Jesus?

6. If goodness is a full description of the character of God, which we see clearly in the life and death of Jesus, how ought we to respond? What practical things can you do? How can this group encourage one another?

START

When you think of the word “mission” what are your first thoughts (rank these in the order in which they first come to mind)

- ___ People in deepest, darkest Africa who haven’t heard the gospel.
- ___ People in deepest, darkest Europe who haven’t heard the gospel.
- ___ That really is the job for the specialists.
- ___ I’m pretty sure I don’t have the gift of evangelism.
- ___ I feel reluctant to describe unbelieving people as lost—it sounds pretty arrogant.
- ___ I feel hesitant about saying that Jesus is the only way to God—it sounds exclusive.
- ___ I’d rather give money to global mission than speak to my friends about Jesus.
- ___ I love evangelism—find me some people and let me start talking!
- ___ I’m on mission already—there’s people in my street/workplace to reach for Jesus.

READ ACTS 4:1-31

and share any observations with the group.

THINK & TALK

1. In v.1-4 the apostles’ preaching irritated the religious officials of the day. What was so disturbing about their preaching? And what impact did it have upon the regular people?

5. So far we have seen the following features of mission from this early account of the Christian church: the uniqueness of the resurrection, the exclusive nature of Jesus' salvation, the urgency of witness despite opposition and the sovereign control of God over all things. Which of these gives you the most motivation to be involved in local mission? Why?

6. Read the well-known story of Jesus and Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. What insights does this passage give us into mission? How can we apply those principles to life in and around Northbridge?

7. Having looked at both passages, in what ways are you challenged or encouraged to join Jesus' mission with your:
 - Time

 - Talents

 - Treasure

PRAY

Heavenly Father

We praise you for your concern for the lost, and for your great plan for salvation in Jesus. We thank you for your sovereign control of all things, and for graciously involving us in your gospel mission in Northbridge and beyond.

We are sorry that we frequently do not share your concern for the lost, and that we are often overcome with fear at the thought of sharing our faith.

Fill our church with a sense of urgency to reach into the community with the name of Jesus. And give us a willingness to invest our time, talents and treasures into gospel outreach close to home and further abroad.

Amen

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READ

- Monday: Acts 2:14-41
- Tuesday: Acts 3:1-26
- Wednesday: Acts 4:1-22
- Thursday: Acts 4:23-37
- Friday: Acts 5:1-16

“Salvation is found
in no one else,
for there is no other
name under heaven
given to mankind by
which we must be
saved.”

ACTS 4:12

START

What are the different life stages we move through in our families? What are the corresponding levels of responsibility we carry as members of a family as we grow, from infancy to adolescence to parenting/grandparenting?

| Life Stage | Responsibility to Family |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

READ MARK 3:13-35

What stands out to you initially from this passage?

THINK & TALK

1. Who are the different characters & groups in this passage, and which group is ultimately the family of Jesus?

2. Building on your thoughts in the chart in the starter activity, trace the language and imagery of family, growth, and roles/responsibilities in the following passages.

- **John 3:5-8** (birth):
- **1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Ephesians 4:14-15** (infants):
- **Matthew 11:25, 18:3-4** (children):
- **1 Thessalonians 2:7-8** (mother):
- **2 Corinthians 6:18** (father/sons/daughters)

In *Total Church*, Tim Chester and Steve Timmis write,

“By becoming a Christian, I belong to God and I belong to my brothers and sisters. It is not that I belong to God and then make a decision to join a local church. My being in Christ means being in Christ with those others who are in Christ. This is my identity. This is our identity... The loyalties of the new community supersede even the loyalties of biology. If the church is the body of Christ, then we should not live as disembodied Christians.”

3. Do you agree with the above statement? Why or why not? What are some factors that contribute to or detract from church looking like this?

4. Individualism is a defining cultural force that shapes even Christians' view of church. Most of Jesus' invitations, however, were not simply individual invitations to personal salvation; they were invitations to communal salvation and shared responsibility. For example, read John 13:34-35:
- a. What is one purpose of the church family according to this passage?
 - b. How do you think our society's individualist values miss the point of God's purpose for the church?
5. Do you see the church as your primary family, or as something that you struggle to juggle in life? How might either view of church affect...
- Where you live:
 - How you handle conflict with a church member:
 - Your church involvement during times when you may be overwhelmed with work or other pressures:
 - Your attitude when the sermon is not "as good as" the church in the next suburb or the podcast you listened to last week:

6. Before a movie starts at the cinema, there are always previews of upcoming movies. The church is meant to be a compelling preview of what is to come; a picture of the eternal family of God, his covenant people.
 - a. Does your life offer a preview that causes people to want to see the whole picture? Or might it cause them to say, “I don’t want any part in that”?
 - b. How about our church? What elements paint a picture of self-denial, shared discipleship, and mission? What elements showcase hypocrisy, exclusivity, or stringent rules?

“The only answer to one culture is another culture—not just a concept, but a counterculture. A church should offer the world such a counterculture, **a living embodiment of the gospel.**”

Ray Ortlund

START

Complete these sentences:

I know when I'm content when/because...

I know when someone else is content when/because...

For me to be truly content I think I would need...

If I was to explain what contentment means I would say...

READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-10, 17-19

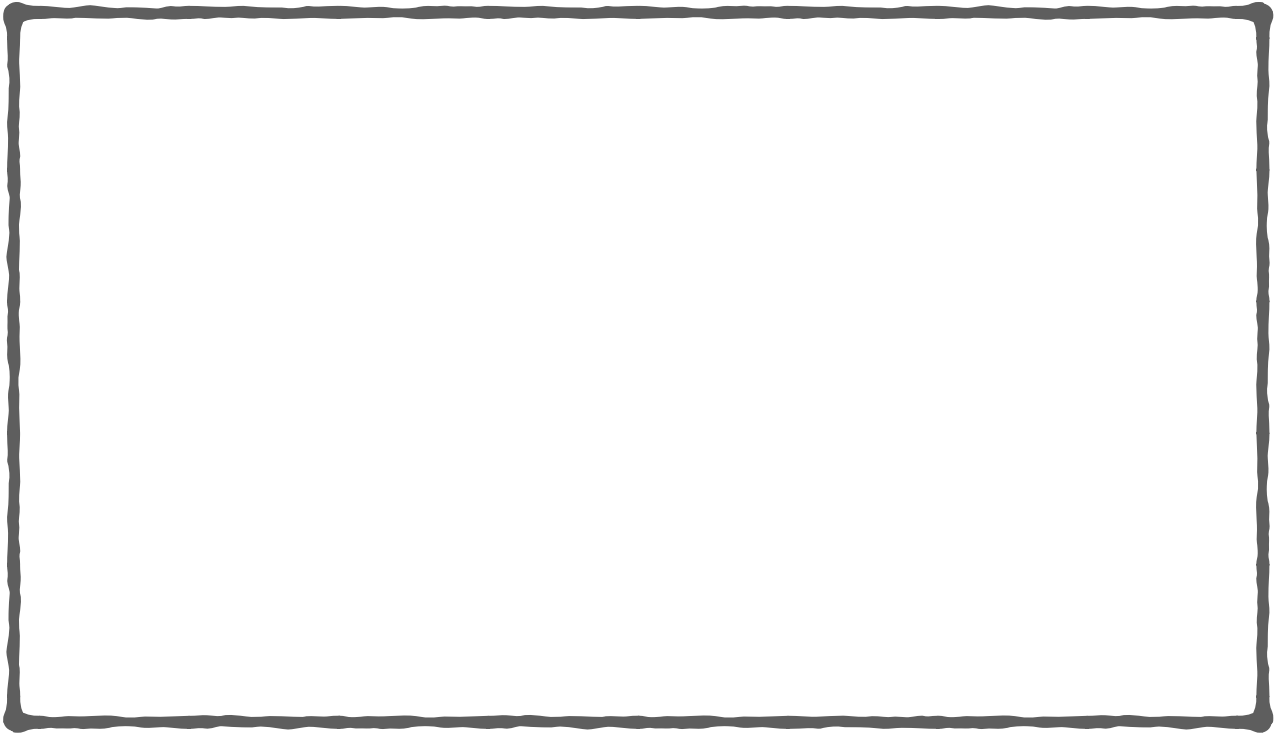
and share your first thoughts.

THINK & TALK

1. In v.6-10 there are two alternatives. What are they, and do you think the Apostle Paul has accurately described them here?

2. What do you think he means by saying that godliness with contentment is great gain (v.6)? What does the Apostle Paul say he will be content with, and why? Could you truthfully echo his words in v.8?

3. Look more closely at how v.9-10 speaks about people who want to get rich? In the space below draw a flow-chart/mind-map/cartoon strip to represent the message of these verses. What strikes you most about how it depicts those who want to get rich?



4. Are people who are rich in this present world (like many of us, v.17-18) told to simply give their cash away? What are the various instructions and motivations Paul gives in these verses?

5. In Old Testament times the people of Israel recognised God as the owner of all things and the trustworthy provider of all their needs by tithing (i.e. giving one-tenth of their income to his service, see Deuteronomy 14:22-29). As people who not only recognise God's ownership of all things, and his provision of our material needs, but who benefit so much by the generous gift of his Son, what stops us from exercising generosity in these areas?
6. In 1 and 2 Corinthians the Apostle Paul organises a collection for other Christians struggling in poverty. Look up the following verses to discover some of the "heart" principles that should govern how much we give away.
- 1 Cor 16:1-2
 - 2 Cor 8:1-4
 - 2 Cor 8:9
 - 2 Cor 8:10-12
 - 2 Cor 9:6-7
 - 2 Cor 9:12-13
7. What practical steps will you take after looking at these passages? How can this group encourage each other to be content and generous? What would our church look like if we really believed all that we have belongs to God?

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but **to put their hope in God**, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

1 TIMOTHY 6:17

START

Answer these True or False:

Prayer is the first thing I think to do in any situation. T F

I believe that my prayers make a difference. T F

I regularly see answers to my prayers. T F

I have a regular time each day for private Bible reading and prayer. T F

I know that God hears my prayers and is present with me, regardless of my state of mind or emotions. T F

I spend time listening to God as well as petitioning him with my requests. T F

READ, THINK & TALK

Who are we praying to?

A knowledge of and trust in the character of God is an important starting place for understanding prayer. What does Scripture tell us about God and about prayer.

1. Divide into three groups; each group can take a section of passages to determine what the passages tell us about who God is. Report back.
 - God is **sovereign**:
 - 1 Chronicles 29:10-12
 - Job 42:1-3
 - Colossians 1:15-17

- God is **personal/knowable**:

- Jeremiah 9:23-24
- John 10:11-15
- Acts 17:26-28

- God is **living**:

- Jeremiah 10:7-10
- Acts 17:25
- 1 Thess 1:8-10

2. **Read Matthew 7:7-11.** How does knowing God's character affect our prayers? How does it affect our belief that he hears and answers prayer? How can prayer affect our belief and trust in God?

How should we pray?

3. What do we learn about prayer from the follow verses? What do they say about our posture in prayer and how we should approach prayer?

- Mark 11:24
- John 14:13-14, 15:7
- 2 Corinthians 12:7-9
- Proverbs 15:29, James 4:3
- Philippians 4:6

What should we pray for?

4. What are some examples of appropriate and inappropriate prayer requests?

5. How should we view unanswered prayer? (See Hebrews 13:5)

6. There are many examples in the Bible of what the early church prayed for, and we can learn much about how to pray and what to pray for by examining their prayers. Pick some of these examples from Scripture to see things we might pray for.
 - James 5:14-16

 - John 17:20-21

 - Matthew 9:38

 - 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, Colossians 4:2-5, Ephesians 6:18-20

 - Luke 18:1-8

 - 1 Timothy 2:1-2

 - Colossians 1:9-10:

 - Ephesians 1:16, 18:

 - James 1:5-6

Do you have any to add to the list above? Are any of these things regularly included in your prayers?

7. We've looked at plenty of Scripture in this study. What are some ways that you might change the way you pray, or some things you feel encouraged to pray for? How does your own prayer life reveal what you believe about God and prayer?

START

Mark with an “X” on each line the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I don't have any gifts, talents or opportunities to serve in my church or community

STRONGLY DISAGREE STRONGLY AGREE

I know what my gifts are but I don't know where to put them to use in the church

STRONGLY DISAGREE STRONGLY AGREE

I am using my gifts to serve in an area/way in which I am passionate

STRONGLY DISAGREE STRONGLY AGREE

It is the ministers' job to minister and the congregation's job to congregate

STRONGLY DISAGREE STRONGLY AGREE

It's more important to serve where there is a need rather than in my passion

STRONGLY DISAGREE STRONGLY AGREE

READ ROMANS 12:1-8

and share your initial impressions with the group.

THINK & TALK

1. In Romans 1-11 Paul details God's great plan of salvation. What should our response be to the mercy of God in salvation? How does this response compare to or contrast with the response of God's Old Testament people?
2. We often think of worship as a matter of prayer and praise on Sundays. How does v.1 give a fuller meaning to the concept of worship? And how does this change the way we think about what we do on the other six days?
3. What's the difference between being conformed and transformed (v.2)? In what ways are you conformed to the patterns of this world, and how can we be transformed?
4. Verses 3 and 6 talk about grace and faith given to us or measured out to us? Does this mean that some people have more salvation than others? What could this mean for the way we serve each other?

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone **it is the same God at work.**”

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-6

GIVING AT ST MARK'S

**“Godliness with contentment
is great gain.”**

1 TIMOTHY 6:6

So says the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 6:6, and this forms the basis on which he appeals to us to avoid greed and to be rich in good deeds, being generous and willing to share (1 Tim 6:18).

Whether we have great wealth or little, it's an open matter as to whether we'll use what God has given us to do good, or whether we will put our hope in money, in all its uncertainty (1 Tim 6:17). Will we lay up treasure for the coming age, or will we lay it down upon ourselves in this present age? These are probing questions for us all, no matter what income tax bracket applies to us.

Firstly, we want to give thanks and say thanks to all those who generously support our church. It is greatly appreciated, for without your support we could simply not continue.

Secondly, can we encourage those who are yet to start supporting the ministry here financially, or who could increase their support, to prayerfully consider doing so. The Old Testament prescribed “tithing” (literally, “tenting”), a practice in which the people of God would give the first tenth of their income, crops, etc. back to God. Spiritually, tithing recognised that everything came from God in the first place. Practically, it provided for the ministry of the priests and temple and allowed for distributions to be made to the poor.

In the New Testament, the emphasis is on the heart rather than a prescribed amount. But you could argue that for those of us who have experienced much grace from God, tithing might be a handy start point (perhaps you could tithe to St Mark’s and then give over and above to other missions and charities).

In 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2, the Apostle Paul says we should get into the habit of setting aside money regularly. As he continues in 2 Corinthians 8-9 he reminds us to be sacrificial and cheerful, to be generous and willing, and to expect it to result in the praise of God.

Could we ask you to do just that now, and as you look ahead to 2024:

- Give sacrificially and generously (a tithe is a good start point)
- Give regularly (electronically, via regular direct debit is ideal for us)
- Expect your giving to resound to the praise of God?

Account Name: St Mark’s Anglican Church, Northbridge

BSB: 032-199 (Westpac)

Account No.: 810022



ST MARKS
ANGLICAN CHURCH
NORTHBRIDGE