

October 2023 in Washington, DC., Anthony Albanese gave a speech to open the newly constructed Australian Embassy in the US.

Capitol.

And he said this, It's an honour to be here to open what all Australians should consider as a slice of home away from home.

Every one of our embassies is a piece of Australia in another land.

And that's what an embassy is, isn't it?

It's a slice of culture of country in another place, in a new home.

Embassies need ambassadors who represent their home country, who represent their king or queen or leaders.

Dr.

Kevin Rudd is the current Australian ambassador to the US.

Kevin Rudd was born in 1957.

He became fluent in Mandarin in his early years as a student, studying at the National University in Canberra, and then also studied in Taiwan and finished off his PhD many years later in Oxford.

He joined the Department of Foreign Affairs at age 24, served as a diplomat in Stockholm and Beijing, and then became involved in state politics in Queensland, which led him to become the leader of the opposition of the Labour Party and ultimately Prime Minister of Australia.

I go through his journey because we all have a journey as an ambassador.

That was Kevin Rudd's journey, or some of it, but Paul says that if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, like so many of us in this room, you are his ambassador, and that is a privilege, amen?

We are ambassadors of Christ of glory, his glory.

We bring something of the kingdom of the heavens wherever we go, so that people understand who we represent.

So this morning, we are going to look at what Paul says about the ambassador's journey.

As I said before, if we are followers of Jesus, we are ambassadors, and we are ambassadors of glory.

We are on a journey from awe to love to transformation to mission.

From awe to love to transformation to mission.

2 Corinthians is Paul's great letter about glory.

He unpacks the glory of God from all sorts of different angles.

We've seen in the series that glory in the Old Testament was a word that represented weightiness.

It was God's weight, his grandeur.

And in the New Testament, the word for glory means more brightness.

So we have this idea from Scripture, Old and New Testaments, that God is incredibly weighty in his grandeur and so bright, so holy.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians a whole lot about glory, and so he says that Christians reflect the glory of God to the world.

In fact, it says that when it's happening the way it should be, his glory is perfectly reflected in us.

The Scripture says in 2 Corinthians, we are being changed from glory to glory in the image of Christ.

Paul says our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

He says, light has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Christ.

So many quotes about glory.

Does anyone get a little bit bamboozled by them?

They're wonderful, but it's sometimes hard to get your head around exactly what it means.

I think we could summarize it to say it's wonderful.

Amen?

If you're a follower of Jesus, the glory of God is manifest in us and through us and to the world for God's glory.

We are His ambassador.

We're first of all ambassadors of glory who need to experience awe.

This is what we read in verse 11.

Since then, we know what it is to fear the Lord.

We try to persuade others.

What we are is plain to God and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.

We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than what is in the heart.

If we are out of our mind, as some say, it is for God.

If we are in our right mind, it is for you.

Paul knows the fear of the Lord.

He knows it.

He has experienced it.

It began on the journey that he was on a road to Damascus.

His name was Saul and he was confronted by the risen, glorious Jesus.

And in seeing him, he was struck with the fear of the Lord.

He was blinded and an eye came later to restore his sight.

He experienced reverential awe.

And he says in verse 11, We are plain to God and others.

We are not duplicitous in character.

Our hearts are wholeheartedly given over to the glory of Christ.

And it shows in our behaviour.

He says, at times, basically, we might seem so heavenly minded, we look out of our minds.

But it's all for the purpose of being an ambassador of awe.

The fear of the Lord.

Have you experienced it?

The fear of the Lord involves awe at God's unrivaled majesty.

Amen?

His otherness, his awesome presence and eternity.

So we've talked about this in recent months and even last year.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge.

It is essential for the journey of following Jesus.

And it begins with just awe at the greatness of God.

But then it moves to an admiration of his attributes.

We are firstly struck by, wow, you are so weighty and bright and amazing, but I'm also struck by your holiness and everything about your attributes, your greatness, your sovereign plans.

There is no God like you.

And then when I understand what you did, Lord God, I am amazed at your love.

We have awe at his greatness, admiration at his attributes, and amazement at his love.

The classic Jerry Bridges story talks about how the fear of God must lead to the love of God and loving God back.

Imagine you had a job in the military.

You were a private, a first assistant to the general.

And when you were up close, you saw how extraordinary the power and authority was of this man.

So you're working for the general in the army, and you're just struck by his power.

You're in awe.

But as you start to get to know his character, you're drawn to admiration.

This man is not just powerful.

He has an amazing and godly character.

But it's not until, in this illustration from Jerry Bridges, it's not until the private is in the heat of battle, and he happens to be in a jeep with that same general, and they come under fire, and the vehicle is turned over, and the private, his life is at risk, and the general risks his life to save the young private.

Suddenly the young private not only sees his greatness and his attributes, but he's struck by what?

His love, his love.

And this is the fear of the Lord Paul speaks of knowing he is in awe of God's unrivaled majesty.

He has admiration for his marvelous attributes, and he has appreciation of God's matchless love.

And as he shares these aspects of his revelation of God, he is an ambassador of glory, pointing others to acknowledge the same awe that he has experienced.

Do you follow?

When we experience the fear of God in its fullness, we can then take that and we're meant to share that with others.

So let me ask you, do you point people to the glory of God through your life example of living in the fear of the Lord?

Are you an ambassador of his glory from how you live?

The ambassador's journey takes us via awe and then into a deep revelation of Christ's love.

This passage is just so wonderful, isn't it?

Verse 14.

For Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died.

And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view that we once regarded Christ in this way.



We do so no longer.

The word for compelled here means to press, to hem in on both sides, to channel in a direction.

Love is a constraining force.

Paul has no other choice but to be an ambassador.

Do you know what that's like?

Do you know what that's like?

Paul is compelled by the love of Christ to be his ambassador.

Jesus told a story which is recorded in Luke, chapter 7.

He was at a Pharisee's house and they were having a dinner.

Do you remember it?

He's at this house and the story goes that a woman comes in of ill repute and comes up to Jesus and starts with an alabaster jar of perfume, pouring perfume on his feet.

And then she starts weeping and the tears are mixed with the perfume.

And the tears and perfume and her hair are rubbing and cleaning his feet in an act of worship.

And of course, the Pharisees find this a bit disturbing because they know that this is not a woman that a rabbi should know or have anything to do with.

And it seems like Jesus doesn't really mind.

And so Jesus tells a story in Luke 7.

And it's a story about debt.

And he tells a parable that explains basically, if you've been forgiven much, you'll love much.

But if you've not been forgiven much, you don't have a revelation of what has been done for you, you won't love much either.

He says, I tell you, her many sins, this woman's sins have been forgiven as her great love has shown.

But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.

Do you know how much you are loved by God this morning?

Do you know how much, how far he has gone to show you his love in Jesus?

Paul says, we are convinced that one died for all.

Isn't that a beautiful statement?

Anybody?

One died for all.

This is the great exchange, the divine exchange of the Gospel, that instead of all of humanity being judged for their sin, one representative from God, the Son of God, perfect, in every way, went to that cross.

And he who knew no sin, as Paul writes in the end of chapter 5, verse 21, became sin for us, that in him we might, all who put faith in Christ may become the righteousness of God.

What an extraordinary idea.

How long has it been since you've thought about what this means?

One died for all.

The sin of the world, that rolls off the tongue, doesn't it?

The sin of the world was poured on him, that the wrath of God might be unleashed on that sin.

That's that incredible, terrible disobedience that Adam and Eve did.

And then the murder that their son Cain did to his brother Abel.

It's every despicable act of abuse, of violence, of injustice, every massacre that has ever happened on this earth, every thought that is evil, every lie, every expression of sin.

That's weighty, isn't it?

That weight of sin, the Scripture says, was piled on him who had no sin, so that there would be a divine exchange that could take place.

And he who had no sin was sin for us, for the world.

He was taken to a cross, and the wrath of God was poured out upon sin in Christ for us.

Hallelujah.

So that by faith in that act of mercy, we might become the righteousness of God.

We might have a divine exchange.

We might have a relationship with God the same that Jesus had before he went to the cross and took that sin.

And of course, his righteousness could not be held down.

The grave could not hold him and he rose again from the grave.

Paul says, when you understand the level of love Christ has lavished on each of us, that love compels, constrains, catapults us into the world to be his ambassadors of glory, which is to be an ambassador of his love.

The text says he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves.

What would they do instead?

They would live for him as his ambassadors, for him who died for them and was raised again.

I would put it to you, it's very important to regularly come to a place where you remember, no longer, no matter how long you've been a Christian, how sinful we are.

Amen?

I'm a sinner in need of the mercy of God and I have received it.

And what does that mean for me?

I want to tell others.

I want to be his ambassador.

The Ambassador's Journey leads us to the new creation, another epic text in our passage today, verse 17.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come, the old has gone, the new is here.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.

And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

It's so important to realize that becoming a Christian is not an improved version of your old self, amen?

Sometimes we can think, oh, I've got an upgrade.

What upgrade did you get?

I've become a Christian.

They bolted something onto me.

It was called a life upgrade.

I'm now going to heaven.

I've got this ticket.

It's a golden ticket.

I basically feel like the old version of me, but apparently I've got a bolted on addition.

It's this upgrade.

That's not the language that Paul uses.

Praise God.

He says, you are a new creation in the Greek.

The new creation has burst in.

It's a veritable quarry burn to turning up.

It's here.

The new creation has come.

The old has been swept away.

All this is from God.

Praise Him.

We didn't deserve this forgiveness.

Can I remind you of that today?

We didn't initiate it, this new creation status.

We didn't get ourselves close to what God required.

Reconciliation is from God and God alone.

Hallelujah.

All this is from God.

By faith in Christ's life, his death and resurrection, we have been reconciled.

Is anyone an accountant or a finance person in the room?

Could you raise your hand?

Quite a few of us.

This is accounting language, so let's get excited.

There's some reconciliation to be done.

The accountant in heaven comes and he takes my ledger of sin and he wipes it clean.

I have no debt on my ledger when I have faith in Christ.

That is to be reconciled to God.

Hallelujah.

I am a new creation.

I have no sin on my ledger.

It has been taken away.

There is no guilt and shame for me, no condemnation because Christ has taken it away.

No one else, one person died for all and he died for me.



The text says if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come.

Who can receive this?

Anyone and everyone.

If anyone is in Christ, all this is from God.

We are ambassadors of glory and what a privilege it is to tell this story to the world.

Are you worthy to be an ambassador of glory?

The journey will take you through the fear of God where we learn awe.

Or the journey will take us through the love of God, which in turn compels us to love others.

The journey of the ambassador will take us through a radical transformation where we become a new creation.

And the journey will naturally lead us to become ambassadors on mission, on mission.

Verse 20, we are therefore Christ's ambassadors.

As though God were making his appeal through us.

Let's think about that.

Isn't that just extraordinary?

God wants to make his appeal through us.

I feel like saying, could you use someone else?

They'll never see God in me.

I'm just a sinner.

And the response is, yes, you are a sinner that I have saved.

And the more that you appreciate, like Paul, that you're the worst of sinners.

But in that clay, broken, fragile vessel is housed the glory of God in the Spirit of God.

Amen?

And we get to be his ambassadors, floored as we are, as though God were making his appeal through us.

We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God, Paul says.

God made him who had no sin to be sinned for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The mission wasn't given to angels, was it?

Angels play a role in the mission of the gospel going to the world, but that's not who God chose.

Jesus chose a motley crew and joined us with them.

And in Matthew 20, he says, I give you what?

Authority, power, it's what ambassadors have.

They go and represent the king.

I would put it to you that it's not too far from the truth that the church was sent out to establish embassies.

Have you ever thought of it like that?

We come with the kingdom of the heavens, a slice of home, and we go everywhere in this world, and we set up little embassies that are inclusive, and they're called the local church.

We say, come, come in, find out what it's like at home.

Your home, your heavenly home.

God wants to make his appeal to the world through us, because we have been equipped with wisdom through the fear of the Lord, forgiven through the love of the Lord, renewed and transformed through the power of the Lord, and charged with the task of mission by the authority of the Lord.

I wonder, this morning, here or online, have you come to bow at the glory of Jesus?

Have you bent the knee and confessed him as Lord and Saviour?

And if you haven't, I want to encourage you, because I'm an ambassador.

So, I have to say this, and it's my privilege to do it.

I'm on mission.

This is the mission of my life.

I've done it for 30 years, preaching in a pulpit, and it's more than that, but this is part of it.

And so, it's my privilege to read to you 2 Corinthians 6.

As God's co-workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

You've heard it today, the divine exchange.

He's taken your sin and mine.

In the time of my favour, I heard you, and in the day of salvation, I helped you.

I tell you, now is the time of God's favour.

Now is the day of salvation.

Turn to Him, repent, and be reconciled to God.

Turn to Him.

If you can't do it now, do it this afternoon.

Do it tonight.

We need to be reconciled with God, or we will go to hell, because sin must be judged.

If the divine exchange doesn't happen for us, we get what He took.

We are judged, and we will be separated from God forever, because sin brings death.

Please receive His forgiveness.

Turn to Him.

Call on His mercy.

And for those of us who are already in Christ, and many of us in this room are, can I encourage you and pray a blessing over us?

Make a statement of blessing.

May you grow in the fear of the Lord.

Could you say amen if you believe so be it?

May we grow in the fear of the Lord.

May we grow in our understanding of Christ's love for us, and let it compel us to love in His name.

May we grow in our wonder and freedom of being, new creations.

And may we grow in our capacity for mission, the mission of Christ that He has decided to carry out in and through us.

Are we doing it the way we would dream of doing it?

That's a genuine question.

What a privilege, friends.

It is that we have been transformed into new creations, set free from sin.

And with that message, we are charged to go and tell the world.

Represent him for all to see.

Lord God, we thank you for the blessing of the gospel, the power of the gospel, the mind-blowing love of Christ who died in our place, that we might be the righteousness of God, we might be ambassadors, that we might set up embassies, local churches, expressions of community, where Christ is Lord and may it happen all over the world.

Lord, for some of us, we have been stuck in guilt.

We didn't talk about it, but in 2 Corinthians, Lord, we know you say, through Paul, that we are not unaware of the devil's schemes, that he masquerades as an angel of light and he brings deception.

And yet, you also say in 2 Corinthians, Lord God, through your spirit prompting Paul, that we have weapons that can pull down the powers and take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ.

We know, for many of us, we're in a battle.

We suffer from habitual, powerful bondage to sin.

But you have done enough to break us free.

And I pray, Lord God, that you might empower us to step out of the darkness and into the light, your glorious light, the freedom of the saints.

In Jesus' name.

Amen