

**Read:** <sup>1</sup> My heart is not proud, LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. <sup>2</sup> But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content. <sup>3</sup> Israel put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore.

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, focus our eyes and our hearts on you today. Keep the hustle and bustle of our lives from diverting our eyes away from you and the wonderful things you have done and continue to do for us. Focus us on the most important thing. Amen!

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Do you know who this bloke is? His name is Michael Caton – a popular Aussie actor isn’t he? I think one of his most successful roles would have to be as Darryl Kerrigan in ‘The Castle.’ The Castle is the story of your typical Aussie battler family fighting with the authorities to keep their home which happens to be right next door to the airport – that wants their land.

Now there are some very well-known quotes from this movie aren’t there?

1. “That’s going straight to the pool room!”
2. Looking at the trading post, “what’s he asking for it?....Tell him he’s dreaming!”

And then there’s the one I’m interested in today. It’s when they head down to Bonnie Doon – which in the past has been a famous spot in Victoria for water skiing and a bit of fishing. And Darryl Kerrigan, surrounded by his family, his boat and their holiday shack says to his wife, **“How’s the serenity!?”** I said the same thing to Janelle as we settled into Cairns – then Yasi started blowing in my direction.

I think the reason these quotes have stuck with us is because the Castle has tapped into Aussie culture – our culture. We laugh because we can relate somehow – even if it’s a bit overdone. **“How’s the serenity”** makes sense when you get away and kick your feet up for a few weeks. But how long does the serenity last? It sure didn’t last long for Darryl Kerrigan did it? Before he knew it, he was in court for the fight of his life. What happened to the serenity?

What about you? Once the holiday comes to an end – the tension pours back into the neck and shoulders doesn’t it? What’s ahead? We say things like, **“Well its back to the grind, or back to the hustle and bustle of life.”** Hardly a picture of serenity! I confess I only said it once to Janelle when we arrived in Cairns – haven’t said it since.

King David is the character behind PS 131 today. But it is the content that is so striking. This psalm is written and spoken by someone who has absolutely come to terms with life. All of life. This person has seen highs and lows and everything in between but remains confident, content and relaxed (serene) in the midst of it. And before we think to ourselves, **“Yeah, that’s where I’m at!”** Husbands ask your wives for a reality check – and then husbands give your wives a reality check (in a loving way). Ask a friend who will be honest with you and who knows and loves you. If you have children...then take a risk and ask them – How’s the serenity at our place? You may be surprised by their answer!

The truth is that in the throes of life, we’re not all asking the question, *“How’s the serenity”* the same way Darryl Kerrigan meant it. We’re not always confident, content with what we have and quietly serene.

BUT be comforted by the fact that life wasn’t always so quiet and serene for the Psalmist either. Verse 2...the first word is “BUT.” The BUT means that things were very different beforehand. The BUT means that previously the Psalmist was living in the hustle and bustle....the daily grind. He was faced with the same kinds of obstacles and challenges you’re faced with today. So while Verse 1 begins with the words, *“My heart is not proud, LORD, my eyes are not haughty...”* It wasn’t always like that.

We’re not talking about trivial things either – but serious matters of the heart.

- The hearts restlessness and desire to have more and more – we don’t always know what – just that we want more. For King David that happened when he saw Bathsheba bathing on her roof top didn’t it? **What is it that you crave more of?**
- It’s talking about the pride we feel in our hearts about our selves and the self-sufficiency we portray to others.
- That same pride can also creep into our relationship with God. Self-sufficiency doesn’t always leave a lot of room for a saviour does it? But sin remains sin and it separates us from God. ***And there’s not a lot of serenity in a bad conscience is there?***

Verse 1 continues, *“...I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.”* But it wasn’t always that way...

To ‘be concerned with great matters’ here comes from the Hebrew word to walk back and forth with something. It’s when your attention is somewhere else all the time and you pace around consumed with what’s on your mind. And it doesn’t stop when you lie down either. Perhaps you know what it’s like to toss and turn in bed when your mind just can’t let go of something. You don’t get a lot of rest. Not a good time to be asked, *“How’s the serenity?”*

For the Psalmist, things started with pride and ambition and then moved onto meddling in affairs beyond his ability and comprehension – something we’re especially good at.

Time magazine this week: The headline on the cover reads **“2045: The year man becomes immortal.”** The article says that, ***“Within 30 years, we will have the means to create superhuman intelligence. Shortly after, the human era will be ended.”*** There’s more...***“People are spending a lot of money trying to understand this new movement...[including NASA and Google] in the event that it turns out to be real it will be the most important thing to happen to human beings since the invention of language.”***

Is that right?

Here’s an example of human centred pride: speculating about things beyond human control – even if some people think they know more about humanity than its Creator.

The other hot potato at the moment concerns natural disasters. There are some things we just shouldn’t try to explain away - like Flooding, Yasi & Earthquakes in NZ. My inbox nearly exploded

with emails about Christchurch, God’s judgement on sin (seeing as the Cathedral spiral collapsed) and speculation about the end times. But it’s not our place to declare God’s judgement on people in the face of any natural disaster. That’s what happens when we meddle in things too big for us to comprehend and we can do more harm than good – even with the best intentions.

Here’s what we can say. This is what we know: Jesus Christ was crucified for my sin and the sin of the world. He bore the heavy load of all sin along with its consequences of death so that we don’t have to. God’s judgement and the full force of His wrath fell upon Jesus. St John says, **“*He [Jesus] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*”** That’s what we can say with confidence. We point people to Jesus.

As for speculation about the end times...only the Father knows that time. That’s what Jesus told his disciples when they started to concern themselves with the date of Jesus’ return isn’t it? We trust in what God’s word *does tell us* and share that with others who walk to and fro with a burden of speculation; who become anxious and consumed with it. Comfort them with good news.

Share with them the truth that God clothes the birds of the air and the lilies and grass of the field – and will certainly care for them. Be assured yourselves that your Heavenly Father cares for you with a love beyond human comprehension - seen in Jesus - who will not abandon you under any circumstances.

Where is God in times of disaster and speculation? Where is God when there is no serenity in your life? **Keep looking to the cross, to the source of your renewal and rebirth. That’s where we can see God with the greatest clarity. Keep focused on the cross which is the source of power for the renewal of all things** – including this fallen world we live in that groans as with the pangs of childbirth.

The cross is really the highest and most wonderful thing. On it our Lord Jesus, the wonderful counsellor was lifted up – not in pride, but humble service. As a result wonderful things have come to us through it.

Mysterious things that Time magazine can’t comprehend. Through it a deep peace and serenity abides with the people of God even in the midst of tragedy and natural disaster. That’s your baptism talking – connecting your life to the crosses power and giving you the confidence to say with the Psalmist, **“*1 My heart is not proud, LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. 2 But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.*”**

A content child. Content because we know that God doesn’t withhold anything from us, but has given us every good gift.

- Gifts that serve our deepest and in-most needs.
- Gifts that don’t look down on others in pride, but encourage others, building them up and helping them on their way today.

So instead of ‘walking about’ focused on ‘great matters and wonderful things’ of worldly thinking, let’s occupy ourselves with what really matters.

- Let’s concern ourselves /‘walk about’ with Jesus Christ who is present with His gathered people;
- Who doesn’t need another 30 years to try and grasp some kind of superhuman intelligence – but who was there when God spoke the foundations of the universe into being!
- Let’s occupy ourselves with the Word of God. With promises that don’t speculate about immortality, but promise eternal life to all who believe in His name. Thanks be to God!

The Apostle Peter writes to Christians exhorting them to nurse on the milk of the word – and for good reason. He says, **“<sup>2</sup> Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation...”** and find comfort and yes – even serenity in those rock solid promises. If you’re going to crave for something – crave for more Spiritual milk that will nourish your soul.

When we make our home in the word, God does something. We find ourselves effected in different ways to the world around us. Like infants in their parents arms we find a quiet confidence in the care of our Heavenly Father, not just for the holidays, but the whole journey of life. In the hustle and bustle and the daily grind, we are “soothed” as we drink and draw nourishment from the milk of God’s word. That leads us with the Psalmist to encourage each other with the words of verse 3:

**“<sup>3</sup> Israel put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore.”**

Fix all your expectations on the LORD. That and that alone is the key to security and serenity that will carry you throughout your whole life. And keep concerning yourself with the cross each day,

- The place of forgiveness and life;
- The source of your renewal and rebirth;
- The source of power for the renewal of all things.
- It’s the promise of God – its rock solid and safe from any natural disaster.
- It’s better than all worldly speculation and it’s yours now – today! You don’t need to wait until 2045...

So **“How’s the serenity?!”** Think about that this week, when the daily grind begins again and you’re surrounded by hustle and bustle. Concern yourself and walk about with the promises of God ringing in your ears and enjoy the Serenity and the confidence that brings. It’s not about tomorrow or the day after, God’s promises are for today when you need Him the most. Then tomorrow we all fix our gaze on His promises again. Discipleship is always a daily journey with the Lord.

To TIME magazine this week at least, I say, **“Tell ‘em they’re dreaming”**. To you – the gathered people of God I say, **“enjoy the serenity you have in Jesus.”**

**Amen.**

And the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus now and forevermore. Amen.