**PEW SHEETS SEPTEMBER**

**I have not got time!**

By Geoff Serpell

We have doubtless all used the excuse about a lack of time, to avoid or postpone doing something which requires additional effort, mental and or physical, beyond our regular chores.

The current lockdown required to fight the Covid-19 pandemic, may just provide us with the time to turn to or return to a musical instrument hidden away in the back of a cupboard, collecting dust, or maybe a piano with a blanket covering it maybe stored in the garden shed?

As children, many of us were taught to play an instrument, usually the piano, but alternatively a violin flute or guitar. Many would be the reasons why tuition ceased. Lack of interest usually prevailed, and the instrument put away or sold. It has, in Australia down through the decades been rare for people such as Eileen Joyce or James Morrison to rise to world prominence as a concert artist, no doubt being specially gifted and prepared to do daily practice.

Fortunately, my third son Andrew, persevered after a trombone was handed to him at school. There are water stains from years of playing still on the concrete floor of my insulated workshop. These marks attest to the hours he played without upsetting the neighbors during the night. Before the pandemic Andrew played and sang twice a week at a restaurant music hall at Docklands in Melbourne.

Is not this pandemic a golden opportunity to give music another go? Many an offer is awaiting us for example on U-Tube by a tutor. I have spotted one example of learning to use vibrato on a violin. Many an artist is available to hear and watch on any instrument or voice just by a few clicks on the internet.

**Reflection**

Matthew 25:14-30 records the parable of the talents, meaning not just money but also including ability or a God given gift where the story relates to the servants who used their talents and then were invited to share in the “Master’s happiness”. Will you make the most of any opportunity entrusted to you by a gift from God?

**Jesus and the present tense**

By Bill Pugh

Some of us remember school days. Learning about the various uses of time, past, present and future tenses. Those who studied Latin learned about the pluperfect tense! In his teaching Jesus used the present, the here and now meaning, of his words. John, in his Gospel, records seven vital references to who Jesus is, and what He means for us, here, now and forever.

I am the bread of life (John 6:35,41,48,51). I am the light of the world (John 8:12). I am the door (John 10:7,9). I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). I am the good shepherd (John 10:11,14). I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

Knowing he will suffer death on the cross, he used the future tense to make this wonderful promise to his friends. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am, you may be also (John 14:3).

**Reflection**

The song we often sing puts it this way:

God gives us a future,

Daring us to go

Into dreams and dangers

On a path unknown.

We will face tomorrow

In the Spirits power,

We will let God change us,

For new life starts now. (Tis 687:1)

**Sunday School picnics**

By Pill Pugh

In the 1930s and 40s before Maccas and Red Rooster, we had once a year, The Sunday School Picnic. Homemade sandwiches, cakes and the best buttered bread covered by coloured hundreds and thousands. Some kids, because of family circumstances, had never been to a picnic and they looked forward to it. It was all free. And a generous one or two in the Church paid to hire a bus so we could travel together to the bush or a beach. Games and races were fun. And a three-legged race caused tumbles and much laughing. We climbed into old bags for a sack race. Teachers and the minister joined in the fun. No distractions then, no mobile phones. It did not matter which home you came from, or which school you went to, or if dad had a posh car. Many had no car. We were all the same, together, at the Sunday School Picnic. In one country parish we picnicked at a lake, swam and played cricket with a bat manufactured from a fallen branch. Together, we were one. I sum that up in a word, FELLOWSHIP. How we need that experience today in our mad rushing world. Where Sunday is just another day. We have no time for fun and spiritual togetherness in this mad rushing world.

**Reflection**

Lord, please give us a dose of common sense about priorities. May our thoughts and actions focus on the goal of discipleship as the scripture reminds us: Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness ,and all these things shall be yours as well (Matthew 6:33).

**Message of hope**

By Bill Pugh

Recently I watched the film *Les Misérables*. Dramatic and terrible scenes picturing the French Revolution. Haunting and involving music. One lyric recurs in my mind again and again.

*“There’s a grief that can’t be spoken,*

*There’s a pain that goes on and on,*

*Empty chairs and empty tables,*

*Now my friends are dead and gone.”*

Around the world such a scenario is occurring again and again. The pandemic has taken millions of lives. Friends, families, innocent lives known and unknown. Family circles are broken, birthday celebrations cancelled, weddings down-sized and funerals limited to a few. Everywhere empty chairs and empty tables. How long will it all go on? Will the curves flatten? Will there be a vaccine and a cure? The great unknowns.

Soon it will be Christmas. A Christmas unlike any others in our life time. It is a time when we gather in our own traditions as families and friends. Happy time of celebration and goodwill. It is the birthday of the greatest healer and health worker who ever lived. In his short life he healed, helped and saved.

He had a message of Hope. He took on the greatest pandemic of evil. He was misunderstood by the system, condemned and crucified for his trouble. Yet he forgave his enemies.

This year, the pandemic will leave us with many empty chairs and empty tables. There will be many crosses to remind us of what we have lost, and we will look for a sign of hope. And it comes when we process the rest of his story. The message Jesus preached was love, forgiveness and new beginnings.

In the midst of this terrifying time we need to demonstrate and hold fast to the faith which underpins our lives.