



Thanksgiving Service to Commemorate the Bicentennial Anniversary of Christianity

HIS MAJESTY KING TUPOU VI SERMON

Friday 26th June 2026
Centenary Church, 10.00AM

Theme for the month of June: God Blessed Tonga. Tonga is Blessed. [*Tonga Fonua Monu'ia, 'Otua 'aki 'a Sihova*]

Sermon: Let us exalt the name of Jesus Christ in our celebration of the Two Hundred Years of the Christian faith in Tonga. [*Tau Katoanga Fakataha 'o Fakavikiviki'i 'a e 'Eiki ko Sisū Kalaisi, 'i he Senituli Ua 'o e Lotu Faka-Kalisitiane 'i Tonga.*]

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1 vs30 & 31: Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord

"Bu of him ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. That, according as it is written, HE that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Who was the nation of Tonga in the early 1800s? Tonga was a tiny, fractured island country in the middle of the Pacific Ocean with a population between 15,000 and 20,000. It was insignificant on the world stage. Tonga didn't even have any gold or diamonds or oil or other riches to make it worth colonizing, but thank God, Tonga was much more important than just a dot on God's map.

Tonga was so important to God that He put it on missionaries' hearts to come and share the good news that Jesus Christ the One and Only Son of God was born into this world, that He lived, that He died, and that He rose from the dead. It was because of sin that Tonga needed a Saviour. It is because of sin that Tonga still needs a Saviour.

It was in 1797 that a group of ten missionaries arrived in Tonga from the London Missionary Society. They couldn't speak the language, and there weren't any converts to Christianity. After three of them were killed during Tonga's internal conflicts between warring nobles, they quickly abandoned their work in Tonga. But God did not give up on Tonga. He sent more missionaries.

The first permanent mission was established in Hihifo by missionaries John Thomas and John Hutchinson in 1826. Key to their success was Nathaniel Turner who arrived in 1827. Due to having previously ministered to Maori, he learned the Tongan language quickly and put it into writing. Then he began teaching Bible classes and opening schools. His Majesty Tupou I and his wife, Queen Salote Lupepau'u, were baptized in August 1831. When designing the seal for Tonga in 1875, Tupou I chose the motto, "Ko e 'Otua mo Tonga ko hoku Tofi'a".

Vikiviki 'i he 'Eiki! / We have much to glorify Jesus Christ for!

1. Ui pea mo Fili / Called and Chosen

God in His wisdom chose Tonga, one of the weakest nations in this world, to claim as His own inheritance. It is because of God's great love that He has lavished upon us that we are called the children of God. And that is what we are (1 John 3:1). God in His wisdom called and chose the people of Tonga, not because of who we are, but because of who God is.

When God chose Tonga, just as He gave the early disciples the mandate to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Matthew 28:19-20), He gave the same commission to Tonga. The early Tongan Christians did not just keep the good news of Jesus to themselves, they carried it in their hearts as they travelled to their neighbours by canoe. They were not afraid as they carried the gospel to Samoa, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and other island nations because Christ had promised to be with them. Today Tongan missionaries are still carrying the gospel to nations around the globe including China, India, and nations in Africa. Vikiviki 'i he 'Eiki! / We have much to glorify Jesus Christ for!

2. Kakai kuo ne fili mono tofia / The nation He chose for His inheritance

Psalm 33:12 says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people He chose for His inheritance." When a nation builds their lives and principles on the LORD, it will be blessed, not just with wealth, but also with perfect peace because they trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3). When a nation follows God, it will also have a strong foundation for justice. It is not about the nation being perfect but about the nation's heart turning to God.

Whenever Israel obeyed God, they prospered and enjoyed peace. When they turned away from Him, troubles followed. The same principle still applies to Tonga today.

As a nation that is God's inheritance, Tonga is called to represent God on earth. We are called to live according to His Word and His Ways. We are called to share the love of Jesus Christ with one another and with others beyond our borders.

On the night of His arrest Jesus told His disciples (John 13:34-35), "A new commandment I give you; Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." In other words, your neighbours, and other nations and peoples will recognize Tonga as a Christian nation, not by our religious practices and diligence, but by our love for one another and for them.

May God strengthen our love for one another across the Christian denominations that man has created in Tonga to divide us. Paul expressed his desire in 1 Corinthians 1:10 that there be no divisions in the church and that the believers "be perfectly united in mind and thought." My prayer for the churches of Tonga today is that you will choose to be united in Christ Jesus. It is only Jesus who died on the cross for your salvation, not your founders or leaders.

Vikiviki 'i he `Eiki! / We have much to glorify Jesus Christ for!

3. Poto`anga / Source of wisdom

Corinth was an important port city in Greece. Due to its resistance, Rome destroyed it in 146 BC and sold its people into slavery. One hundred years later Julius Caesar rebuilt it into a thriving Roman colony. Paul planted the church in Corinth in about 51 AD. At that time the population of Corinth was around 200,000 Roman citizens and 500,000 slaves. Although the Greeks were the slaves, they were often educated and were the educators. They were proud of their wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:29-30 teaches us that because of God's grace we are united with Christ Jesus in such a way that He becomes our source of wisdom. The dual themes of 1 Corinthians are correction and God's wisdom. Paul contrasts God's wisdom that is centered on the crucifixion of Christ and worldly wisdom which valued education and power. The Corinthians were used to the Greek and Roman power-oriented, competitive, self-serving system that they thought was wisdom. Paul argued that God had a far greater wisdom to offer them. Godly wisdom is based on the cross and leads to humility and unity. Vikiviki 'i he `Eiki! / We have much to glorify Jesus Christ for!

4. Ia Kalaisi Sisu / In Christ Jesus

What is this great wisdom from God? It is embodied in Jesus Christ, and He has imputed it to us by the Holy Spirit. It is when we are in Christ Jesus that He becomes our righteousness, our holiness, and our redemption.

We are in Christ Jesus because of God's grace in our lives. He called us and drew us to Himself as His children. We are now in Christ, and Christ is in you the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). This is our boast! By virtue of our union with Christ, everything that He has belongs to us.

Fakatonuhia / Our Righteousness – Righteousness describes our right relationship with God.

Fakama'oni'oni'anga / Our Holiness or Sanctification – When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, he began in verse two addressing them as having been sanctified (fakatapui) in Christ Jesus. Then he reminded them that they had been called to be holy. The goal of churches should be that their members should not perish but have eternal life. In many modern churches today comfort and happiness are the goals, rather than salvation and holiness.

Peter wrote to the early Christians, many of whom were facing (1 Peter 2:9) persecution, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

Huhu'i / Our Redemption – Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for our sins by His death on the cross. He has redeemed us, purchased us by the shedding of His own precious blood.

These three things – righteousness, holiness, and redemption – we could not earn or achieve in our own wisdom and strength. It is only through our union with Christ that they are ours.

Vikiviki 'i he `Eiki! / We have much to glorify Jesus Christ for!

Conclusion:

Today we celebrate God's love and what He has done for Tonga during the past 200 years through His One and Only Son, Jesus Christ. It is only because of God and His great love, mercy, and grace that we are a nation belonging to Him and united in Him.

Vikiviki 'i he `Eiki! / We have much to glorify Jesus Christ for!

Dear Heavenly Father,
Thank you for our redemption through your Son, Jesus Christ.
Help us to live in your peace.
Help us to live in your wisdom.
Help us to live in your righteousness and holiness.
Help us to live in unity with our fellow believers.
Help us to live in your love.
May your love for us overflow in the way we love others.

Vikiviki 'i he `Eiki! / Jesus, we have much to glorify you in!
Amen