



Pentecost Week 15

Worship@Home September 13, 2020

Welcome

As we write this, a few weeks before what might be the day of the end of Stage 3 & 4 lockdowns in Victoria, we welcome you to worship. If there's now a lessening of restrictions and a lifting of the State of Emergency then we celebrate that we've been able to keep the virus numbers low and to care for each other through this challenging time. We know that the battle is not over and we will endeavour to continue to provide this resource while people are still unable to gather together for worship.

Welcome!

Light Your Candle

Know that the light of Christ
is shining in your life,
shining from the beginning, shining in the dark,
shining for you
and for those around you.

Call to Worship

Put it down, put it all down, everything that you don't need to carry into this time of worship. Imagine there's a box under your chair. Slip it out and put it all in there - concerns about what's for lunch, or when to put away your winter coat, or what to do about that barking dog ... Put it all in the imaginary box and push it back under the chair. You can get it later (if you want to).

**Come Holy Spirit,
enter this space and rest on us
with your calm presence
and your wild inspiration.
Breathe us into life as we worship God:
Source, Son and Spirit. Amen.**

Acknowledgement of Country

The earth beneath us is holy ground, so is the land around us and the seas and rivers that ebb and flow. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this place, and pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. We commit ourselves to truth telling and to walking together in justice, hope and peace.



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Uniting Church in Australia
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Hymn: At the name of Jesus

TiS 231

At the name of Jesus
every knee shall bow
every tongue confess him
King of Glory now:
this the Father's pleasure
that we call him Lord
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom he came
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last
brought it back victorious
when from death he passed.

In your hearts enthrone him
there let him make new
all that is not holy
all that is not true.
He is God the Saviour
he is Christ the Lord
ever to be worshipped
trusted and adored.

When this same Lord Jesus
shall appear again
in his Father's glory
there with him to reign
then may we adore him
all before him bow
as our hearts confess him
King of Glory now.

Opening Prayer

God whose power and ways
are beyond our understanding,
we bring before you our thankfulness.

Thank you

for this time of worship and reflection,
and for the stories of your presence
alongside people long ago,
and here with us now.

Thank you

for coming to live beside us in Jesus,
offering us a way to see your love at work
and to know for ourselves
the healing power of forgiveness,
the freedom of living in your grace,
and the delight of life in your light.

Thank you

for the ongoing gift of the Spirit,
companion with us on the way,
urging us to offer our best
and to see each other as you see us.



1Caroline Maria Noel

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Prayer of confession

And yet, we confess that
we struggle to see ourselves
and each other
as clearly as you see us
with open eyes of mercy, love and grace.

We confess that we find it easier
to wear cloudy lenses of judgement
feeding our need to feel superior
by putting others down.

We confess that the mirror is often misty
when we look at ourselves,
holding onto shame and blame
for our past mistakes
and making ourselves feel worthless
and not deserving of your love.

Free us, God of deliverance,
from being enslaved to these ways,
lead us through the river of change
and land us safe on the other side;
eyes wide open
to see your goodness and glory
reflected like candles in our eyes
and in the eyes of each other.
May it be so, Amen.

The Readings

- **Exodus 14: 19-31**
- **Romans 14: 1-12**
- **Matthew 18: 21-35**

For these words of faith and Jesus the Word:
Thanks be to God.

Reflection:

Rev Deacon Wendy Elson

Do you remember the Picture Bible that was around a few years ago? Alright, I mean about 50 years ago. It was very helpful in making the Bible alive to children. I do, however, think that it gave me some false images as well, which have needed to be examined later in life.

The Exodus reading is a bit unexpected to me. The image it creates is not like my child picture Bible. Yes, it does say that God caused the wheels of the Egyptian chariots to be sluggish. My pictures did show them stuck on the rocky bottom of the sea. But no, they didn't just plough on into the sea in their chase of the Israelites. Actually, they all camped the night at the seaside first and the Israelites were protected by something amazing. The angel and the cloud which guided them through the day by taking the lead, went around to flank them during the night and to keep them safe. It even gave them light. What assurance and what protection was lovingly offered to the people in such a fearful and risky time!

Then in the Gospel we see the importance and nature of forgiveness. Of sharing grace time upon time, no matter what the offence. Just as we have been given grace, so also we give grace to others. It cannot be hoarded.

I will try not to get caught up in the debate in the Romans reading regarding vegetarianism and weakness. How ironic that this reflection falls to me as the team vegetarian. So, I am not going to go there as judgements are out of place in the debate!

We are told here in Romans that judging is not ours to do. 'Who are you to judge?' Judgement is an arrogance and it is a hindrance to those we judge, and to us when we act as judge.

Reflection continues P4





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Reflection continues

I think that there is a fair bit of pressure on us these days to make judgements, to make assessments. Pressure even to make snap judgements which we then need to hold and reinforce. Perhaps, it's all those uncomfortable judging shows around cooking efforts, talents in dancing and singing etc. Like in this Romans passage, what we eat, even which day of the week people consider best, we judge it all. We think we have to have an opinion on all things. It is such a human thing to make a judgement and if we can possibly find the "other" to be inferior, then we can feel superior. It is so tempting and at a shallow level it can build our self esteem (although deep underneath we know, don't we?). And then comes the pressure inside us, to hold on to these views and judgements. Letting go of these preconceived ideas is then really tough. But how many times have YOU been forgiven? Hard to justify then, not doing the same for others. Just let go.

So, without that forgiveness the Matthew passage underlines, we are pretty out of step. We ignore the grace we have been given and hold it to ourselves. We can find so much to judge about and it can be the strongest, the dominant part, of our nature. Instead let the dominant part of our nature become compassion and grace. And perhaps gratitude has a part to play here.

We are all less than whole, we are all human, make mistakes, act like duds, whatever! But we are all forgiven and loved and cherished and celebrated. God is with us and forgives us. Jesus already showed deep love by being prepared to keep making the points of love, even when that threatened his life. And, well, you know the rest of that story. God has already forgiven us and shown us absolute love.

Throughout the tough restrictions there have been reminders to be thankful and to make gratitude a practice. I recently found myself



holding a point of view I have held for years that I had to change. I needed to see things in a different light, to write myself a new narrative. I had told myself that there was no joy in a certain part of my life. So, I decided to reframe it and see it through a different lens. To do this I needed to change my self-talk that kept insisting that there was no joy. This part of me kept looking for the reasons to see it that way. And of course, that is what it found (since it was all it COULD see). It caused me to look at a couple of other things that I had flippantly described a certain way and which had then acted as reinforcement. Restrictions have been good for reflection!

Reflection continues P5

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Reflection continues

So maybe these eyes of grace and compassion could even act on my own self-perception, allowing me to see myself as God does. OK, so this is a work in progress but if God has and does forgive me, why do I hold on to those things I see as regrettable. Why do I feel a little bit ill when I think about certain words and actions? The eyes of grace through which I see, need to be more like contact lenses than spectacles I take on and off.

As I said at the start, things are not always as we remember them to be, as we thought that they were. We are then invited to change our understandings and perceptions and take courage in the fact that we are surrounded by the Light and Grace of a very present God. For sure, God's grace is not to be sniffed at. The whole Egyptian army was chasing the fleeing people who must have wondered if they had lost their marbles by following Moses out into the desert. They must have really been at their wit's end with the suffering of being an oppressed and discounted people. They left everything behind and trusted God and Moses, and God gave them reassurance, courage and deep care through the protection and presence of the Light and the Cloud. God's nature, God's glory and grace, was right there. And is right here!

The Psalm tells us that we are to tremble at the presence of the Lord, present to us in and through the remembering of God's care and provision for us. We are to be transformed by this knowledge and experience.

So judging is out, and gratitude and mercy and grace are in. Let God take care of the rest. Treat others with tenderness. Be tender with yourself, for then you can tend others. Live gratitude and awe, for then you will recognise grace.

Prayers of the people

Loving and forgiving God,
we pray this day for the leaders of the World,
every Nation, every Island:
For those who lead communities devastated by virus;
For those who lead countries at war, or who
provoke war, or those who seek to destabilise
peace:

- We ask for wisdom to bring peace to every place
- Fortitude to seek justice for the oppressed and vulnerable
- And courage to stand with them for new life to emerge.

Loving and forgiving God,
we pray for our leaders in this country—
Our Prime minister and the Leader of the
Opposition—that they may work together in
these days of threat of infection,

- And seek solutions to keep all in our community safe and well.

We hold our premier in prayer today:

- For wisdom and stamina to lead our state to health.

Loving and forgiving God,
we pray for our Church:

- That our past stewardship may create a pathway,
- For new ministries in these new days and beyond our lifetimes.

We pray for our Ministers of the Word, our
Ministers of the Diaconate, and our pastors and
all who work in our Church:
To bring the schools, hospitals, and Social
Services and congregations
to their full potential,
so your Good News may be made real in
human life and in the Creation.

Prayer continues P6

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Prayer continues

Loving and forgiving God,
bring healing to those who are sick;
Bring deliverance to those who are dying;

- Bring hope to those who care for them,
in these days.

May those who grieve
know your comfort and care.

In this moment, we bring those prayers
For which only we can know.

< a space for stillness prayer >

We bring all our prayer together in

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Passing the peace

Is there someone who you need to reach out to with a hand of peace? Maybe as a healing gesture between you, or as an offering of peace in their struggle. Make sure you do that today, maybe even after you read the blessing. You could read it for them also.

Offering

We make our offering of money, time, prayer and service to the church, not because we need to repay God for God's goodness, or purchase a favour or feel better than others. We offer what we have because we want to uphold God's work in the world, bringing life and hope to all.

Our offering is received and blessed.

Notices

If you'd like to join worship "On-Line" you can access a version of the Shearwater service from St John's Uniting Cowes here:

<http://cowes.unitingchurch.org.au/index.php>

The Gippsland Presbytery have other worship resources here:

<https://gippsland.unitingchurch.org.au>

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Hymn: If I have been the source of pain

tune: SINE NOMINE (For all the saints)

If I have been the source of pain, O God,
if to the weak I have refused my strength,
if in rebellion I have strayed away,
forgive me God, forgive me God.

If I have spoken words of cruelty,
if I have left some suffering unrelieved,
condemn not my insensitivity;
forgive me God, forgive me God.

If I've insisted on a peaceful life,
far from the struggles
that the gospel brings,
when you prefer to guide me to the strife,
forgive me God, forgive me God.

Receive, O God,
this ardent word of prayer,
and free me from
temptation's subtle snare;
with tender patience,
lead me to your care.
Amen, amen.

²C. Maude Battersby

Blessing

May the love of Christ enfold you,
wherever he may lead you.
May he guide you through the wilderness,
protect you in the storm.
May he bring you home rejoicing
at the wonders he has shown you.
May he bring you home rejoicing,
with a welcome at the door.

Go in peace, to love and serve God.
In the name of Christ, Amen.

You can pick up the imaginary box from under
your seat and reclaim the contents if you
choose. Or you can simply discard it to the
great recycling of worries and struggles; and
may they return as blessings!

*Today's service has been prepared by
Rev. Jennie Gordon, Rev. Dcn. Wendy Elson
(Reflection), Rev. Ian Turnnidge.*

*Shearwater Congregations: Toora: Fish Creek:
Foster: Tarwin Lower: Inverloch: Wonthaggi:
Phillip Island: Uniting Church in Australia*

¹Used with Permission Caroline Maria Noel 1817-77 alt. CCLI 241 739

²Words: C. Maude Battersby & (trans) Janet W. May

