

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH

Pentecost 20

October 10



The rich young ruler -
Trinity Episcopal Church
Houston, Texas

WORSHIP AT HOME

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Carve out a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are.

Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4

before the day is out

Unwavering in your power,
Unflagging in your zeal,
uncompromising in your position,
in a world which is invariably inconstant
It is good for us
 To awaken to your will of constancy for your world.

We pursue our projects,
Depart to our private dreams,
Invest in our deepest hopes.
They are fragile and flimsy at best,
At worst they are devious and destructive.
Either way, they pale before your constancy.
We gladly affirm – in spite of our own inclinations –
That you will well-being among us,
That you intend justice for the vulnerable,
That you command mercy and compassion among us.

Turn us,
Before this day is out,
Before this year is up
Before this pandemic is over
From our will to yours,
Wean us before we sleep, from our petty hopes,
Relocate us in your eternal resolve,
That the earth may be fully your realm,
That the world may delight in your shalom,
That we ourselves may find our true freedom
In your sovereign purpose.

Yours, not ours – is the kingdom, the power and the glory ...

And we are grateful.
Amen

Job 23

Great calamity has befallen Job who is a blameless and very wealthy man. He has lost all his children, his cattle and goats, sheep and camels, all his servants. He believes- as do his friends - that this calamity has been brought upon him by God and over many days he holds a long and tortured dialogue with these three friends, seeking to answer the question: why has God brought this suffering upon me? The wicked are meant to suffer, not the righteous. The entire book of Job is a struggle with this deep existential question.

Then Job answered:

'Today also my complaint is bitter;
his hand is heavy despite my groaning.
O that I knew where I might find him,
that I might come even to his dwelling!
I would lay my case before him,
and fill my mouth with arguments.
I would learn what he would answer me,
and understand what he would say to me.
Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?
No; but he would give heed to me.
There an upright person could reason with him,
and I should be acquitted for ever by my judge.

'If I go forward, he is not there;
or backward, I cannot perceive him;
on the left he hides, and I cannot behold him;
I turn to the right, but I cannot see him.
But he knows the way that I take;
when he has tested me, I shall come out like gold.

My foot has held fast to his steps;
I have kept his way and have not turned aside.
I have not departed from the commandment of his lips;
I have treasured in my bosom the words of his mouth.
But he stands alone and who can dissuade him?
What he desires, that he does.

For he will complete what he appoints for me;
and many such things are in his mind.
Therefore I am terrified at his presence;
when I consider, I am in dread of him.
God has made my heart faint;
the Almighty has terrified me;

If only I could vanish in darkness,
and thick darkness would cover my face!



Job Rebuked by His Friends ~ William Blake 1805

Hebrews 4. 12-16

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The Gospel according to Mark 10. 17 – 31

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before Jesus, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother."' He said to him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.



Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.' They were greatly astounded and said to one another, 'Then who can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.'

Peter began to say to him, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.'

Reflecting

Job and this rich man from Mark's Gospel are really very alike. Both are wealthy and, in their time, they and others would have regarded their wealth as a blessing from God. Given that everything has gone wrong for Job, his friends probe and press him to reveal where it is that he has sinned. Because the affliction which has befallen him is surely, in their world-view, sign that God is displeased and is bringing punishment as some kind of divine-disciplining of Job.

And in Mark, neither the rich man himself, nor the disciples can understand why the rich man would have to give up his possessions, surely signs of divine blessing, in order to inherit eternal life. The disciples ask: *'Then who can be saved?'* We must be clear that the man is not asking for everlasting life, never-ending life. He is asking to be able to receive the life of God which has a quality about it which is without time; the life of God present now.

I can recall being at a church event in some enormous Victorian-era-pile of a building and standing with the General Secretary at the time. I made the comment to him that it was a pity the church lacked the kind of generosity that enabled the construction of the kind of building we were in. He remarked that Hell had no power over people pockets or imaginations any longer, at least in the Uniting Church.

Job is terrified of God. His image of God is that of a coercive and demanding God, exacting allegiance and obedience:

Therefore, I am terrified at his presence;
when I consider, I am in dread of him.
God has made my heart faint;
the Almighty has terrified me;
If only I could vanish in darkness,
and thick darkness would cover my face!

He doesn't understand why the things that are happening to him are taking place. He is bewildered and laid low in body and in mind. There is no way out from the trap of his world view. What have I done wrong, goes his logic? In time this logic comes undone as we will find.

Likewise, the rich man is both upright and obedient and he and Jesus' disciples see his wealth as divine reward for his virtue. But Jesus understands that his wealth is an obstacle to his receiving the life of God, so he counsels him to give it up in order to gain treasure in heaven. What is surprising and disarming about this interaction is that Jesus looks at the man and loves him; with tenderness. This is a look of compassion. It's not the look of disapproval and Jesus' word to give up everything is not a coercive. It is an invitation to receive. But his hands are full and so he cannot receive.

I hear an echo of the words of the Beatitudes from Matthew's Gospel:

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

While Job in his suffering becomes impoverished in monetary and property terms, he also becomes impoverished in Spirit; he ultimately comes to know through deep pain and suffering the nature of God and God's mercy. It is this same poverty of Spirit that Jesus counsels the rich man to take up. But, we are told, he was shocked at the thought of giving away his riches, the imagined rewards for his virtue, and went away grieving.

In the story of Job it is a character called ha-Satan [the Accuser] from the heavenly council who is allowed to have his way with Job. Job is tested to his limit by ha-Satan, except, God says, preserve his life. Job in his speeches amongst his three friends wants to drag God into a law court and argue his case with God. So, we have here the relationship between God and humanity imagined in legal terms, where the human must obey the law, measure up, not transgress. And that material prosperity is a measure of how well we have done in the measuring-up stakes.

But Jesus ushers in a way of imagining a different world. A world characterised by mercy. Jesus loves the rich man. And when he walks away Jesus doesn't offer a judgemental rebuke, rather, I imagine him following the man with eyes of mercy.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews offers us an image of this realm of mercy and grace:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus offers a way that imagines for us a world other than that of rewards and punishments, of an over-bearing judgemental God. He imagines instead of God on a judgement seat, God reigning from the throne of mercy who can be approached in our time of need.

We all carry within us the accuser's voice, that voice of condemnation and recrimination, who judges and undermines our God-given divinity. This is the voice which condemns and leaves us too often inhabiting a living hell. Jesus invites us instead to approach the throne of grace and to receive abundant, healing divine mercy and to be made whole.

This is our joy, this is our delight, this is the truth we hold to and affirm. This is the Good News.

Thanks be to God!

Prayer — prepared by David Baxter

Loving God,

As we come in prayer, we are conscious of a world where so much that is good and honourable is happening as people make their contribution to the life of this country and make plans for their future. We pray for those who really do want to make a positive difference with their skills.

We pray for our nation, for all those in positions of leadership in this time of uncertainty and confused relationships. May they take pride in making a positive contribution to our society.

We think today of those young people who are planning for their future in this time of anxiety and uncertainty in our society, particularly the year 12 students.

We pray for our church as we continue to adapt to a new way of doing things. May we continue to find ways to serve you and find joy in our worship. We pray for the worshipping communities around us as they give expression to their faith

We pray for those who struggle with life because of health issues, broken family relationships, homelessness. We pray for those feel that they do not belong, who feel disabling pressures, loneliness, depression, a sense of being lost. May those who are suffering find the way to peace.

We remember the wider world, international friendships, the things that bind us together, the things that create barriers in our relationships. May we as an international community seek to find ways to live together in a positive, encouraging way.

Our Father in heaven ...

Blessing

The strong, ever-present grace of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit
remain with us this day
and always. Amen

Early prayer: Walter Brueggemann, Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth, p 18, alt.

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NEWS AND NOTICES

AFTER WORSHIP CHAT – ZOOM LINK emailed

For those wishing to catch up after this Sunday's worship service, there will be an opportunity to stay online to chat afterwards on **Sunday 10th October 11.00am to 12.00pm**. Zoom Link is being emailed to the congregation and you can phone in by dialling 7018 2005 (Melbourne) using

Meeting ID: 811 8086 7463

Passcode: 749944

Remembering and Celebrating our Halls.....

Dotted through the latest October edition of Pathfinder you'll find people's memories of how our halls have been used. Thank you to everyone who has contributed articles (Warwick, Heather, David, Elizabeth, Dot, Jan) and to Lorraine for several of the photos– we hope you enjoy them. May they inspire you to reflect on your own memories and perhaps send something for next month – written articles and photos welcome. We will also be including material on the website.

If you'd prefer to tell someone your story so we can write it down for you, please contact Dianne Richter (0413 750 089).

We have also set up an online option “Ormond Uniting Video Memories” where you can record your memories so we can create a video record. Here is the link:

<https://app.memento.com/ormond-uniting-video-memories/bo5dlK8Ap/record>

If you require assistance to record your memory, please contact Gary (041116415) or garyrichter@yahoo.com.au. You don't need sophisticated recording equipment, just a smart phone or laptop with camera.



Meet the Peoples of Gondwana

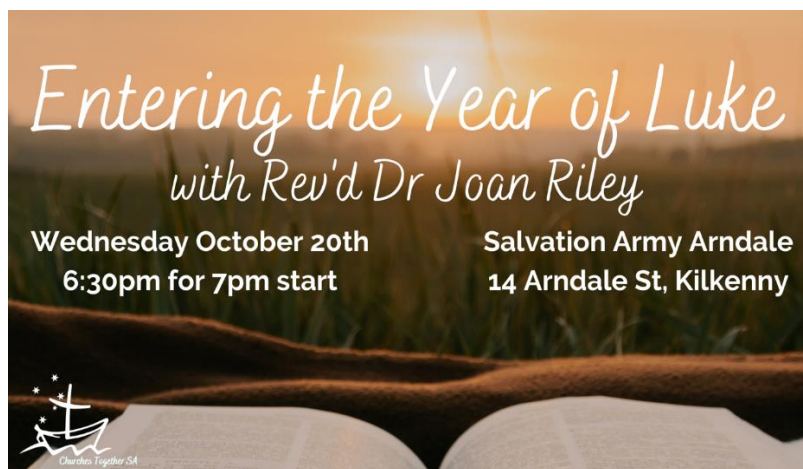
As previously advertised, this Zoom seminar is on **Tuesday 12th October from 9am to 12.30pm**. Zoom link will be given on registration – link below, cost \$20 (incl. Eventbrite fees).

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/meet-the-first-peoples-of-gondwana-tickets-167694624135>

Led by Rev. Dr. Garry Deverell a Trawloolway man from northern Lutrawita (Tasmania), we will be guided through the identity, history, resulting situation and aspirations of Indigenous peoples and how we can work with them to achieve something resembling justice.



And more opportunities for some further online learnings



ENTERING THE YEAR OF LUKE with Rev'd Dr Joan Riley

Wed 20th October 6.30pm for 7pm start

Joan's research includes the multicultural, multiethnic communities of the Early Church, as well as women's role in the Early Church communities. As our Churches grow into diverse and rich communities, Joan will share her reflections on Luke and its message to us, in our diversity and communion together, as one body in Christ.

Luke brings to us a very different perspective, and a cosmopolitan voice, where Jesus' Way brought a new togetherness and engagement as God's people.

This event will be in person in SA as well as streamed. [Register here](#)



THE ORMOND LEARNING HUB

THE BIG STORIES OF OUR FAITH

Sometimes reading the scriptures can be strange and confusing. When a story seems a bit strange to us, we can rightly ask: Why this story? Where does it fit? Across the ark of both the Old and New Testaments there are some big stories into which much of the scriptures fit. Understanding these important stories and themes can make sense of particular passage's meaning.

In this third course for 2021 we will explore the big themes of the scriptures. Some of these will include:

- Bondage and Liberation, Exile and Return and Sin and Forgiveness.
- We will explore the question: Does the violence of the crucifixion really redeem us?
 - What does the event of the resurrection mean?

We will draw our material from the series *Living the Questions* and allow generous time for small group conversation.

When: Thursdays 21st, 28th October & 4th November, 7.30pm.

Where: Online by Zoom (if we are able to meet face to face, we will advise at the time)

Cost: \$30 for the course

Who: led by Rev. Andrew Boyle

Enquiries and booking to: learninghub@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

ROSTER for Sunday 17 October 2021

READING	Frank Ortolan	
PRAYERS	Dianne Richter	
RESOURCES DELIVERY	Brad/Lorraine Denniston	Warwick Barry

