

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



24 JULY 2022
PENTECOST 7



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.

Prayer for today

Help us to grow...

Help us to grow Good Father:
help us to reach out and reach up.
Help us to outgrow our demands and tantrums;
our cries for attention and cuddles.

Help us to grow Good Father:
from the enfolding cradle let us venture
into a world of uncertainty;
holding your hand until we stand steady and proud.

Help us to grow Good Father:
in the sandpit of life help us to build
and share and share
until it hurts — and then some.

Help us to grow Good Father:
in the playground of faith let us achieve successes
measured by mutuality
and fairness and solidarity.

Help us to grow Good Father:
and show us how to love selflessly and without limit
and to forgive
seventy times seven times — and more.

Help us to grow Good Father:
let our childish demands mature into a fervour for justice
and a passion for the fair go
and for fearlessness — and hope.

Good Father
our accumulated years (no matter how few or how many)
are best evaluated by our growth into that maturity
displayed in the teachings and life of Jesus of Nazareth —

whose childhood is shrouded in mystery
but who grew into a kind of adulthood to which we might all aspire.
It's not easy, Father,
but no pain, no gain!

Good Father
yours is a tough love, full of challenges and honesty
and standards
but your love is a love of such unremitting faithfulness and support
that we see in it parenthood writ large
and in which we learn to seek the refuge and strength
that permits us to grow.

Help us to grow Good Father!

Prayer of confession

Does it help...?

Does it help to be sorry, Lord?
Will even buckets-full of "sorrlys" make things better again?
Will a barrow-load of atonement make much difference?
Will a truck-load of regret mend the fences of our lives?

It's not so much about the big things, Lord
but about the little transgressions —
the careless slips of the tongue,
the broken promises,
the pursed lips,
the scowl,
the judgemental scoff,
the superior demeanour,
the intrusion into the private lives of friends and foes —
the failure to value differences,
the resentment — the endless seething resentment
that eats moth-like at the fabric of our lives.

There are times, Lord, when these small misdemeanours seem to define us and we just want to
wipe the slate clean
and get a new chance — a new beginning.
Rumour has it that new beginnings are available;
a free gift of your grace, Lord.
Give us a taste of that, dear Lord.
As we expose our messy lives to you and to each other.
Forgive us — please,
and let our renewed lives grow
less burdened by the mistakes,
the misdemeanors, the missteps
and the mindless mismanagement
that have made us into less than we might have been.

Help us, Good Lord!

Amen

Scripture

From New Testament

Colossians 2:6-15

6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, **7** rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. **8** See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. **9** For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, **10** and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. **11** In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; **12** when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. **13** And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, **14** erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. **15** He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.

Luke 11:1-13

1 He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." **2** He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. **3** Give us each day our daily bread. **4** And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial." **5** And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; **6** for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him." **7** And he answers from within, "Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything." **8** I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs. **9** "So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. **10** For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. **11** Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? **12** Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? **13** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Reflection - Prepared by Rev Ron Townsend

‘OF PRAYER, DARIO AND BAPTISM’

During the service the baptism of Dario Garcia, son of Elizabeth Halliday and Alejandro Garcia took place.

Today we are talking about presents.

Gifts!

I keep dropping hints to my children and grandchildren that since we are coming up to our (Mardie and my) 50th wedding anniversary in December, they should consider giving us a gift which is golden, not a repetition of the Silver cutlery they gave us 25 years ago – which is still going strong!

Gifts!

Today we think about The Gift of the Holy Spirit and the gift of Dario.

The Holy Spirit first (sorry Dario!).

The reading we have today from Luke indicates that....

When the disciples ask Jesus how to pray, he not only gives them a ‘form of words’ – which we know as the Lord’s Prayer - this is not all, or even the main thing he shares, though. Having shared WHAT to pray, he then gives his disciples lengthy instruction on the ATTITUDE of prayer they should adopt.

He hammers into them the mindset that needs to accompany the words of prayer, and he does so with some very clever stories.

First, he tells a strange parable about a person A who is asked for bread by a friend. Now that friend has another friend back at his home, who has come for dinner, and he has no BREAD to feed him! Very embarrassing! So, he goes to person A’s house (he’s a good mate and there was no 7/11 back then) – he knocks and knocks and knocks on the door, screaming out, ‘I need some bread, mate! BUT person A is in bed, asleep and it’s late and the kids are also asleep and will likely be awakened: he is really annoyed! He does NOT want to get up and give his friend any bread – even though he’s got plenty to give.

NEVERTHELESS – he gets up and gives him his bread – WOW!

What happened!?

He gets up and gives him his bread, NOT because his friend just about knocked the door down, but for reasons of shame.

“Gees, I’d better get out of bed and give him his Bread, because if I don’t, my name will be mud all around the village by tomorrow. I’ll be known as Mr Unhospitable – no way!”

What persuades him is not his friend’s persistent asking, but his need to avoid being shamed by his community for being inhospitable.

WELL!? What’s that got to do with an attitude of prayer, I hear you ask?

Let me EXPAND a little -This shamed one is contrasted by Jesus to Jesus’ Father, who always, always responds positively to our requests – always, always responds kindly to our requests

Following this parable, Jesus shares some philosophical thoughts to illustrate more about a correct attitude of prayer

¹¹Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹²Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

(repeat that last verse)

¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Jesus uses two devices to illustrate the attitude which should underline our praying, namely, that God gives lovingly and kindly when God is asked, compared to one who gives out of a sense of shame or obligation.

AND

God gives abundantly, generously, far more than we could ever hope for when we ask, he gives us the most precious gift we can receive: the gift of the Holy Spirit – because we are his loved children

There is no gift greater than this gift, God's very presence dwelling in us and around us.

Which brings us to the Baptism of Dario – to his gift.

How lucky are we today as we will experienced the wonder of Baptism!

WOW! What a wonder!

You may ask, why 'A WONDER!?' We are just going to sprinkle a bit of water on the kid's head!

Well, let me suggest the following.

Dario is a pretty marvellous kid and has great parents and is loved to bits, and we love to see Baptisms because they touch something deep within us - a mystery of connection between a child and his parents, and between a child and family and between a child and the church family and not least, between a child and the author of all life, the living God. A connection! A deep mysterious loving connection!

That's the source of our wonder!

Because in Baptism we ALL participate in an act of 'God enfolding us in God's love.' So, as we baptise Dario this morning we once again claim for him and all God's children the truth that lies at the heart of the Universe, which the new Webb telescope tells us is immense, profoundly and scarily beautiful, powerful beyond reckoning and immeasurably old, but not even that wondrously creative instrument - this telescope, can reveal to us, that at the very heart of the Universe, is the God whose greatest power is not his creative genius, but his connection with us, his ALL EMBRACING LOVE. Now that is something that not even an instrument 10,000 times as powerful as this wonderful Telescope would be able to reveal.

Now, we and he, Dario, exist for but a brief insignificant smidgeon of time. on this small insignificant tiny speck of God's wondrous creation, yet remarkably, for Dario and every child of God, and every part of creation, there is connection with the very heart of the universe, the heart which is pure love, indeed the very heart of God - for those who have eyes that truly see and ears that truly hear.

How then? If not by some wondrous invention of humankind, do we see, hear and know this remarkable love of God, which is the heart of the universe and enfolds us all? HOW?

May I suggest, not, principally by looking to the skies, as exciting and remarkable as that is, but by hearing and seeing and knowing that love of God, revealed to us all, in His Son, Jesus.

So, let's talk about Jesus, Baptism and love, a bit.

The Greek Orthodox Church used to conduct Baptism in the following way – unfortunately, due to political correctness, they mostly don't do it like this anymore. More's the shame.

This is how it happens.

The church is shrouded in darkness and perhaps some solemn music plays.

A dramatic entrance is made by some elders, who carry on their shoulders a small coffin.

In the coffin is the child to be baptised – most probably screaming her lungs out!

The procession reaches the Priest, who conducts the baptism liturgy, baptising the child in the following way:

“I Baptise you Dario, in the name of the Father,” – and at that point the Priest plunges the child into the bath sized font, under the water, then raises the spluttering, screaming child up high, then plunges the child again into the font, declaring, “...and in the name of the Son,” and for a third time, raises him high, then plunges the child deep under the water again, and says, “...and in the name of the Spirit of the Living God,” and then raises the child a third and final time.

At this point, things go ‘nuts’ in the church. The shrouded windows are uncovered, joyous music bursts forth, dancing in the aisles begins and the community present engage in a joyous, feasting and celebration – in which I am sure more than a little Uzoh is consumed.

In case you missed the point, Baptism celebrates our ‘dying’ to self and sin and being raised to New Life, through God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This New Life is centred on Connection to the source of all our love and all our living. This is not something we do, but something which is done for us – through the death and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus, who himself reveals the ‘All encompassing Love of God.’

St Paul speaks of baptismal connection in this way:

¹²when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

¹³And when you were dead in [the] trespasses [~~and the uncircumcision~~] of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, ¹⁴erasing the record, nailing it to the cross.

SO.....

Why would we not pray?

Why would we not pray to this giver of all good gifts!?

Why would we not ask this remarkable Loving Parent of us all, for what we need to sustain this child, Dario, AND each other child of God: that is all of us!?

Why would we not revere, bless and hallow God's name above all names!?

Why would we not demand that God bring to pass his Kingdom of pure love on earth, as it is in Heaven!?

Why would we not ask him for the daily sustenance we need and that the world needs, not wants, needs!?

Why would we not ask for forgiveness through God's eternal love that makes all things new, when we mess things up!?

Why would we not ask this Loving Parent of the Universe to protect and deliver us from all that separates us from and disconnects us from our Loving Parent in heaven and on earth!?

WHY WOULD WE NOT ASK WITH CONFIDENCE of this GOD, who enfolds Dario and each of his children in his love, to give us all that we need? WHY WOULD WE NOT!!!?

Observe a time of silence

Let us now join in praying the prayer Jesus taught us to pray together - THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray together

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come;
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and 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 forever.
Amen**

Prayer – prepared by Heather Baxter

Reconciling God, we pray for the peace of the world.
For the end of all suspicion or rivalry
among the many parts of your Church.

Come with your peace, Lord Jesus;

Come and heal you people

For the exposure of all injustices
and a new courage from all nations to outlaw them

Come with your peace, Lord Jesus;

Come and heal you people

For a fairer sharing of the earth's resources
and the feeding of the hungry,

Come with your peace, Lord Jesus;

Come and heal you people

For the resettlement of refugees
and the uplifting of the downtrodden.

Come with your peace, Lord Jesus;

Come and heal you people

For an end of terrorism and war,
and for international commitment to a just peace.

Come with your peace, Lord Jesus;

Come and heal you people

For the maimed and abused, diseased and the dying,
the frightened and sorrowful.

Come with your peace, Lord Jesus;

Come and heal you people

Reconciling God,
help us to allow the peace of Christ,
which this world's sophistication knows nothing of
to keep us sure-footed, even handed and open armed

Through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen

Acknowledgement: Mission Prayer Handbook 2006 –
God's Word God's World, UCA National Assembly

Blessing

The God of all grace,
who called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus,
establish, strengthen and settle you in the faith;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Thoughts for the week to come

Lord, we pray for all who are affected by natural disasters, from bush fires and plagues to floods and devastating mudslides that destroy homes and livelihoods, putting lives at risk. Merciful Lord, we pray that people living through these difficult times would find comfort and hope in you. And, please bring them the practical aid that they need.

Amen.



Postlude

You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.

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Music: Peter Hurley

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