

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



18 SEPTEMBER 2022

PENTECOST 15



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.

HYMN: TIS 100 All creatures of our God and King...

Prayer for today

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace.
That is enough for me.

The Prayer for Generosity

Lord, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labour and not to ask for reward,
save that of knowing that I do your will.

Prayer of confession

Gracious and loving God, open our hearts so that we are able to admit to you the fullness of our lives – that which is beautiful and good, and that which is hurtful and hateful.

We confess that we do not follow Jesus in all that we do.
We love with conditions attached.
We judge and condemn.
We cast the first stone and keep the logs in our own eyes.
We do not turn to you as the source of our healing.

Forgive us, we pray.

Forgive our sin and empower us to be imitators of Christ in love and service.

Assurance of forgiveness

Friends in Christ, know this: the mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting, and I remind you of this surpassing grace – in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Amen.

HYMN: TIS 564 If we will trust in God to guide us...

Scripture

Amos 8:4-7

4 Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, 5 saying, 'When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, 6 buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat.' 7 The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

Luke 16:1-13

1 Then Jesus said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. 2 So he summoned him and said to him, "What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer." 3 Then the manager said to himself, "What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. 4 I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes." 5 So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, "How much do you owe my master?" 6 He answered, "A hundred jugs of olive oil." He said to him, "Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty." 7 Then he asked another, "And how much do you owe?" He replied, "A hundred containers of wheat." He said to him, "Take your bill and make it eighty." 8 And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. 9 And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. 10 "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. 11 If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? 13 No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

A Pastoral Letter: Number Three

Just for a while, rather than simply repeat the sermon from the church-based service, I have decided to offer the folks not able to attend the service a special tailored “pastoral letter” for their prayerful consideration. The overall theme, for a while, will be The Lord’s Prayer, and today we will look at the next words: “Hallowed be your name”.

Looking at The Lord’s Prayer — Hallowed be your name:

So far, in this little series on The Lord’s Prayer I have discussed the first few words, namely “Our Father” and “in heaven”. We saw how Jesus announced the extraordinary proposition that God is intimately related to us, and intimately engaged with us as is a loving father. At the same time Jesus affirmed that this same God is transcendent, which is to say that he is beyond our understanding. Is this a paradox? Jesus seems to be telling us that it isn’t — that our God is both near and far away and that we can relate to him in both guises. This, as far as an understanding of the nature of our God, is a novel and true revelation and it affects the way we live our lives.

The next words of the prayer advise us to respect and honour God’s name. Does God have a name? If so, he’s been a bit coy about telling us what it is. Moses asked for his name. I just AM, replies God. And we typically just refer to God, implying that there is only one such. No need for a name! Many Christians talk about Jehovah, which is a mistranslation of YHWH, which the Jews are forbidden to speak out loud. But Jesus nevertheless invites us (requires us?) to speak of God with reverence. Jesus wants us to honour God. That intimate Father, that distant almighty creator of all, is not just an idea; for Jesus he is to be taken with ultimate seriousness — and that courtesy will be reciprocated, for this God whom we take very seriously, who is in Paul Tillich’s words “the ground of our being”, promises to take us very seriously too. Our faith is a matter to be taken very seriously indeed in moments of prayer, in expressions of worship, at times of great joy and great sorrow.

Karel Reus (Minister)

HYMN: TIS 602 O love that will not let us go...

Prayer — prepared by Marg Davis

Dear Lord we bring our prayers to you, for your world and your church. Let us pray

Creator God, help us to care for the treasures of the earth, so that its riches and beauty maybe preserved for future generations.

We pray for those who receive too little of the earth’s resources and we ask that you guide world leaders to enable a greater fairness in the sharing of all that you provide.

God of all creation, we thank you for the diversity of our country and its people.

Help us to learn from the first Australians, who know, love and respect this continent.

We think of our indigenous brothers and sisters and pray with hopefulness that together we can build a more cohesive society based on respect, understanding and compassion

Dear Lord we pray for all in positions of power and ask that you help them in their decision making, so that they consider the repercussions of the choices they make.

This morning we pray for all who have been affected by natural disasters, civil conflicts or war. We ask for your blessing on refugees around the world and for all whose families have been torn apart.

As we come before you, we pray for the church worldwide and the many faith leaders.

Inspire all Christians to be true to the example given to us by **your son, Jesus Christ**. Help us all to show kindness and concern for each other.

We pray for all who are suffering- those experiencing physical or mental pain and those who are terminally ill. Surround them with your love and support, and sustain, all the people who provide care and assistance.

We pray for all who have recently died and for those who have lost loved ones.

We give thanks for the life of Queen Elizabeth II and we pray for all her family and those who mourn her recent passing. We pray that King Charles III embraces the responsibility of the monarchy with strength, fairness and compassion.

We pray for each other and for ourselves and ask that you help us all to serve you faithfully in all that you entrust to us.

Never let us take the gift of life for granted and each day **help us to give thanks for our many blessings**.

These prayers we offer to you as we join together and say the prayer that you taught us:-

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 forever. Amen

HYMN: TIS 629, When I needed a neighbour...

Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you:
wherever he may send you;
may he guide you through the wilderness:
protect you through the storm;
may he bring you home rejoicing:

at the wonders he has shown you;
may he bring you home rejoicing:
once again into our doors.

Thoughts for the week to come

Lord, why did you tell me to love everyone?

Another prayer by Michel Quoist. From *Keeping Hope: Favourite Prayers for Modern Living*, Gill and Macmillan, 2014 (found on Kindle)

This is a confronting prayer. It is a cry of anguish. It is a cry for help. Is there no limit to the demands our faith puts upon us? Do we not deserve some rest? Is it not our turn to get some TLC (Tender Loving Care)? But the poet offers some comfort. This is the way we meet our God. This is the way we serve our God. There are costs to discipleship – but there are rewards.

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Lord, why did you tell me to love everyone?
I have tried, but I come back to you, frightened...
Lord, I was so peaceful at home, I was so comfortably settled.
It was well furnished, and I felt cosy.
I was alone, I was at peace,
sheltered from the wind, the rain, the mud.
I would have stayed unsullied in my ivory tower.
But Lord, you have discovered a breach in my defences.
You have forced me to open my door.
Like a squall of rain in the face, the cry of other people has awakened me;
like a gale of wind, a friendship has shaken me.
As a ray of light slips in unnoticed, your grace has stirred me

... and, rashly enough, I left my door ajar.
Now, Lord, I am lost!
Outside, others were lying in wait for me.
I did not know they were so near; in this house,
in this street, in this office;
my neighbour, my colleague,
my friend.

As soon as I began to open the door, I saw them,
with out-stretched hands, burning eyes, longing hearts,
like beggars on church steps.

The first ones came in, Lord. There was, after all,
some space in my heart.
I welcomed them. I would have cared for them and
caressed them, my very own little lambs, my little flock.

You would have been pleased, Lord. I would have served and honoured you in a proper, respectable way. Till then, it was sensible...

But the next ones, Lord, the others, I had not seen them: they were hidden behind the first ones. There were more of them and they were wretched; they overpowered me without warning. We had to crowd in, I had to find room for them.

Now they have come from all over, in successive waves, pushing one another, jostling one another.

They have come from all over town, from all parts of the country, of the world; numberless, inexhaustible.

They don't come alone any longer but in groups, bound one to another.

They come bending under heavy loads; loads of injustice, of resentment and hate, of suffering and sin...

They drag the world behind them, with everything rusted, twisted or badly adjusted.

Lord, they hurt me! They are in the way, they are everywhere.

They are too hungry, they are consuming me!

I can't do anything anymore; as they come in, they push the door, and the door opens wider...

Lord, my door is wide open!

I can't stand it anymore! It's too much! It's no kind of life!

What about my job?

my family?

my peace?

my liberty?

and me?

Lord, I have lost everything. I don't belong to myself any longer; there's no more room for me at home.

Don't worry, God says, you have gained all.

While people came in to you,

I, your Father,

I, your God,

slipped in among them.

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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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NEWS AND NOTICES