

# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



23 JULY 2023

PENTECOST 8



# 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.*

## THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

### GREETING

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all  
**And also with you**

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

From river to ocean, from campfire to hearth,  
may the First People who have cared for this Land be blessed.

From breath to song, from step to dance,

may those who follow your First Peoples' ancient stories, guide us on the journey of living honourably in this place.

From greeting to Amen, from silence to chorus,

may our worship join with the voices of the First Peoples of this Land.

*(or as per the printed version on the lectern)*

### WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Welcome to you all. It is great privilege to gather together to worship God. For those who are using these worship resources at home, I hope they help contribute to your journey with Jesus.

Today we look at the Parable of the Sower and the Weeds. As each petition of the prayer for others is completed worshippers are invited to place some wheat grains (from a bowl on the Communion table) onto a Cross. Those at home might like to do something similar at home (perhaps using grains of rice if you don't have any wheat.) Today we will also refresh ourselves on what parables set out to do, read about Jacob, one of the not so heroic followers of God and unpack another deep section of Romans – but we are examining each of these stories using the tool of PARABLE. Prepare to be surprised.

### CALL TO WORSHIP

People of God, together we are the body of Christ. Called to be faithful and live in hope, we seek God's purpose. In confidence of God's presence with us throughout all of our days, we are reminded of God's promises. Come and worship, together or apart we are loved beyond measure. In our diversity we are held and nourished and even celebrated.

# HYMN TIS 87: You are before me

## PRAYERS OF ADORATION, CONFESSION and PARDON

### ADORATION

Dear Lord,  
When I think of you loving me before I was even born, I am amazed and assured. Before I was even aware, you were bringing my potential into being. Even though you know me better than I know myself, you still love me and have my days in your hands. Looking over my life, I can see your presence in my going out and my coming in. What can I say? Thank you Lord, thank you!.

### CONFESSION

Lord  
Sometimes I get to thinking that I am in control. Then I am reminded that you have known me and held me always.

In compassion and love you forgive me for my arrogance and my sense that I belong to myself.

Sometimes I forget that I have an obligation to live life with others in mind. I get to thinking that I can hide from your Spirit. I am your child but figure I can be more than I am.

And then, in compassion and love you forgive me for settling for less than I am.

I forget that I need to seek freedom, for myself, for my neighbours and for your creation. Instead I suffer under inaction and lack of empathy.

In compassion and love you forgive me for my lack of insight and thinking everything is here for my pleasure and convenience.

Sometimes I take on the idea that I have the right to judge the actions and motivations of others, forgetting how much you have forgiven me.

In compassion and love you forgive me and offer me healing and freedom. You offer me life, and ever more life. You remind me that together we are all your beloved children.

### ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us: "Our sins are forgiven".

**Thanks be to God.**

# A REFRESHER ON PARABLES.

Parables are usually but not always stories; usually made-up stories, but a particular kind of story.

First, a parable is set within the context of the listeners world. Hence Jesus told a lot of parables that employed the theme of the rural because Palestine was very rural.

Second, a parable is about 'truth' - not necessarily historical truth – it points the listener in the direction of an important reality: an important truth.

3<sup>rd</sup> A Parable makes **A POINT** – a single point - an important point; dramatically.

4<sup>th</sup> Parables encourage the listener to develop deeper perceptions about a difficult concept, issue, value, or truth. There is always an element of mystery in a parable, even apparent confusion.

Finally, parables use hyperbole: i.e. exaggeration to emphasize THE point of the parable.

## THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet  
**A light to our path.**

### GENESIS 28:10-19a

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. <sup>11</sup>He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. <sup>12</sup>And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. <sup>13</sup>And the **LORD** stood beside him and said, "I am the **LORD**, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; <sup>14</sup>and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. <sup>15</sup>Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

<sup>16</sup>Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it!" <sup>17</sup>And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." <sup>18</sup>So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. <sup>19</sup>He called that place Bethel;

## REFLECTION ON THE KINGDOM VIA PARABLE 1.

REFLECTION: 1.) The Parable of Snakes and Ladders (with apologies to the writer of the Book of Genesis.) Once there was a man who was a ratbag. Born into a loving family, he nevertheless, took advantage of his privileged position in the family.

He was very cultured and smart, but full of himself AND sneaky. He secretly stole things and carefully manipulated people to his advantage.

His mum thought the sun, moon and stars shone out of his you-know-where! however, he manipulated members of his family, including his mum and his brother – nor did he hit it off with his dad!

In fact, he stole his inheritance from his older brother: A real snake in the grass! Then, as they grew older, he started to worry about his brother. 'Perhaps he will come after me and kill me!' So, rather than calling in a mediator to solve the family dysfunction – created by himself – he 'shot through!' He ran like a coward when he thought his brother might turn on him.

As the years passed, off in a far country, he was reasonably successful; accumulating wealth and family (a couple of wives etc).....but there was something missing – something wasn't quite right. Home was calling...but.... was it safe...?

After much prevaricating, backing and forth-ing, he decided to head for home. He and his family along with all his entourage.

But being a scaredy cat, the coward that he was, as he got closer and closer to home, he got more and more nervous. At this point the ratbag in him really came out. When he was still a fairly safe distance from home, he struck upon a nasty plan! I am afraid to say: another snake-in-the-grass effort.

He determined to send his whole caravan on ahead, to, as it were, test the waters with his brother, in his absence (of course!)! He didn't go, that would have been far too dangerous - OMG - another 'snake-in-the-grass' effort! Send the family off as the sacrificial lambs!

So, there he was, all alone, worried, scared stiff, nervous BUT eventually falling into a deep sleep and having one very scary dream. Particularly scary for a sleazy snake of a man, because the dream was about a ladder that goes right to the top of the 'playing board': HEAVEN! AND snakes are notoriously bad at climbing ladders.

Then SHE came down

WOW! – yes, SHE came DOWN the ladder – down to the bottom of the playing board! I reckon Sleazy might have even been 'sweating in his sleep' – dreaming: 'AHHHH, SHE is coming to get me!!!

THEN a dream of a miracle or was it a miracle of a dream happened – SHE actually AFFIRMED the Sleaze Bag!!!! [An aside: I think, rather than affirming him, SHE should have given Sleazy a swift kick up the you-know-where!]

SHE said: 'I promised your forbears I would 'make them great again!' MY sort of great! You can't 'trump' that, can you!? And yes, 'Ratbag,' the promise applies to you, too! You belong to me. You are my loved child! So, START LIVING LIKE IT! Get on with being one of my kingdom people and make it happen!'

'SO! It's over to you, My Child! I'm off, up the ladder to the top of the board! I'll see you there later!'

Then he woke up and he knew something BIG had happened – so of course, he constructed a statue to SHE... ..who must be obeyed. But now, he WANTED to obey HER! This was BIG, but more importantly, even though living out HER vision felt really tough, it felt right and for the first time in his life, he really felt good about himself – even felt loved! Suddenly he understood Her words in the dream: "Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go"

Let anyone with ears listen and hear!

## **HYMN TiS 417: Loving Spirit, Loving Spirit**

### **ROMANS 8:12-25**

<sup>2</sup>So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— <sup>13</sup>for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup>it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

<sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. <sup>18</sup>I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup>for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; <sup>23</sup>and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

## REFLECTION ON THE KINGDOM VIA PARABLE 2.

**REFLECTION:** 2.) The Parable of Paul: The Adopted Son

The family were travelling home. Really travelling HOME! A long journey from Melbourne to Bairnsdale.

In the back sat three siblings. Sister, brother and their newly adopted brother: PAUL.

The 6 month old, Paul, had just become a member of the family – he had been adopted and his two siblings spent most of the journey staring admiringly at their new family member. Adoring looks! Anticipating looks! Loving looks!

Paul had completed the family and the family were all going home, together.

Paul was not a second-choice appendage – this family wanted him to be part of their family and adoption was his method of ‘birth into that family!’

It was about choice! Paul was a chosen one!

He completed a family, making for enhanced love and belonging for all members. And that proved to be the case.

In his late teens Paul developed a severe mental illness which led to a heavily disturbed remainder of life for him (and for his family).

In mid-2016, shortly after being released from a 7 month hospitalization in a psychiatric ward, Paul unexpectedly, tragically and accidentally died of a drug overdose.

In his eulogy his siblings related:

*‘In his life, there were two competing gravitational forces operating on Paul. There was the drawing power of his warm, open and committed family and friends, on the one hand, and on the other, Paul’s impulse to drag himself away.’*

Then later in the eulogy his brother added:

*‘Paul [had a] strong impulse to reject the welcoming embrace of family and friends who loved him. At the same time, [he was strongly influenced by] the power of that love to draw him back into community.’*

The Parable of Paul explains to us (in the words of St Paul), that... ..

[we] have [all] received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!”<sup>16</sup> it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God,<sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.<sup>18</sup> I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.

Herein lies real hope: Paul and Paul’s family were/are ALL adopted by God our eternal Mother; as her children, made brothers and sisters with Christ, inevitably also suffer with Christ and astonishingly, enter Christ’s glory.

Living or dying, they have hope beyond imagining.

Let anyone with ears listen and hear!

### **MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43**

<sup>24</sup>He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; <sup>25</sup>but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. <sup>26</sup>So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. <sup>27</sup>And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ <sup>28</sup>He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ <sup>29</sup>But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup>Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

<sup>36</sup>Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” <sup>37</sup>He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; <sup>38</sup>the

field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one,<sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.<sup>40</sup> Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup>The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, <sup>42</sup>and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup>Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

The Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## REFLECTION ON THE KINGDOM VIA PARABLE 3.

### REFLECTION:

3.) The Parable of Grow and Clog (*with apologies to St. Matthew*)

GROW: 'Hey Clog, what ARE you doing pushing in and choking everything!? Stop it – you don't belong here! The Grow Wheat family does! You're just a useless Weed! What a worthless lot you are!! What a parasitic family – just totally.....'

CLOG: '... .GO the Weeds! Go the Weeds! Go the Weeds. Now, you're talking, Grow! Fact is, us Weeds are on a real 'high' baby!'

GROW: 'Don't you 'Baby' me! You weed! You lazy freeloaders have no respect for the Grow family. WE PRODUCE! We don't just suck the goodness out of the ground for our own benefit – we produce grain! And everybody knows grain is great.'

CLOG: 'So there: Grain is great! Grain is great! Grain is great!'

GROW: 'Cut it out! So, what!? Your master's gunna dig us out, I don't think so!!! So, how does that grab ya, hey?!

GROW: 'If it was up to me, you'd all be GONE!'

CLOG: 'But It's not up to you! There's a higher authority! You are just gunna have to learn to live alongside us 'stinkers!' Ha, ha, ha, ha!!!'

'AND, at any rate, who gets to say you are the goodies, and we are the baddies!? Who? WHO? WHO?!! Also, aren't you Do-gooder GGs(Grow Grains), supposed to be caring and forgiving and building up, instead of being so 'full of yourselves!? Us weeds are not very religious, but I heard someone singing in the field the other day – it went somethin' like this:

*The reign of God, like farmer's field,  
bears weeds along with wheat;  
the good and bad are intertwined  
'til harvest is complete.*

So, us Weeds who clog things up, is hangin' around Ms Grow, so deal with it!'

Let anyone with ears listen – and hear!

### SONG: The Reign of God

1. The reign of God, like farmer's field,  
bears weeds along with wheat;  
the good and bad are intertwined  
'til harvest is complete.
2. Like mustard tree, the reign of God  
from mustard seed will spread,  
'til birds of ev'ry feather come  
to nest, and there be fed.

3. Though hidden now, the reign of God  
may yet un-noticed grow;  
from deep within it rises up,  
like yeast in swelling dough.
4. The reign of God is come in Christ;  
the reign of God is near,  
a-blaze among us, kindling hearts,  
the reign of God is here!

*Delores Dufner - traditional American tune (LAND OF REST)*

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

*During the prayer, please take some wheat seed from the bowl on the communion table and place it on the cloth and cross on the small table, after one or each of the petitions or when the Spirit moves you.*

Let us pray

God of generous and scattered abundance,  
we pray for the earth;  
bless the ground beneath us;  
spirit, kin and life for our First Peoples,  
the fertile soils and arid plains  
the ocean floor and desert sands.

*Place seed on the cross*

God of generous and scattered abundance,  
we pray for all that grows;  
bless the bush and coastal scrub,  
the flowering wattles and towering gums  
the cultivated crops and reedy waterways  
the urban gardens and flower farms.

*Place seed on the cross*

God of generous and scattered abundance,  
we pray for all creatures.  
bless the life around us,  
seen and unseen, wild and tame,  
the busy insects and soaring birds  
the bush creatures  
and our furry and feathered friends.

*Place seed on the cross*

God of generous and scattered abundance,  
we pray for humankind.  
bless the people of every place and race, the  
hungry and the haughty,  
the sick and the scared,  
the lost and the longing,  
the strong and the shy,



the birthing and the dying.

*Place seed on the cross*

God of generous and scattered abundance,  
we pray for the cosmos,  
knowing that you dwell in the stardust within us  
and beyond us.

Bless the universe.

Lift our eyes to the beauty  
and wonder of your presence.

Bless our living, that in our living,  
we might sow your seeds of love  
generously and abundantly,  
wherever we are.

*Place seed on the cross*

We bring all 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.**

**THE SENDING OUT OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD**

**HYMN TIS 569: Guide me, O thou great Redeemer**

**DISMISSAL:**

<sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup>it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.'

*Rom 8:11*

**BENEDICTION:**

Your days are in God's hands. The Spirit of  
God dwells in you. Rest in the knowledge and  
confidence that God cares for you more than  
you can ever imagine. Abide in hope.

Then go into life to share that knowledge and confidence with all you meet.

And may the Love, Peace, Joy and Grace of God, Eternal Mother, loving Son and Spirit with-us-always, go with you. AMEN

## WORD OF MISSION

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

**In the name of Christ Amen**

## RECESSIONAL HYMN TiS 779: May The Feet Of God

1. May the feet of God walk with you,  
and his hand hold you tight.

May the eye of God rest on you,  
and his ear hear your cry.

2. May the smile of God be for you,  
and his breath give you life.

May the Child of God grow in you,  
and his love bring you home.

*The prayers and call were adapted from the Synod worship resources prepared for use during Covid-19 lockdowns.*

# 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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Fridays, 9.30am-2.30pm

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NEWS & NOTICES