

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



8 OCTOBER 2023

PENTECOST 19



WORSHIP AT HOME

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

Set aside 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. We join with them all.

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.

Focussing ...

From the splash of the stone the ripples move out, wider and wider until they touch the edges: all the edges, and some bounce back. Memories entered and trusted can ripple through our lives, to the edges and sometimes back, and in the ebb and flow memory nurtures hope, becomes living water – gifts of a loving and bountiful God. Thank you God!

Acknowledgement of Country: We come to meet this morning from all manner of places, and on the Country of diverse Clans and Nations of First Peoples', and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging, and commit ourselves afresh to the journey of justice and reconciliation.

Joining the scattered community

Here we begin another week, weaving together the fabric of our lives, in all their different textures and colours, their changing forms and flows.

Here we mark the things that have gone before and hope for newness to come.

Here we celebrate each other's place as one thread in the weaving and cherish the moments when the fabric of our lives become whole.

Focussing for Worship (from Psalm 148)

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise God in the heights!

Praise God, all his angels; all God's hosts, praise God!

Praise God, sun, and moon; praise God, all you shining stars!

Praise God, you highest heavens and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for the Lord commanded and they were created.

The Lord established them forever and ever; fixing their bounds, which cannot be passed.

Come, let us worship this God ...

Song: TIS 187 Let all creation dance

Our prayers - of Thanksgiving: We are amazed and deeply thankful God, throughout the ages you have stirred your peoples into action.

You have surprised your peoples with gifts and possibilities they could never have imagined.

You have moved your people to prayer and your awesome presence has been seen and experienced.

With your healing power you have released peoples and communities from deep inner pain and despair.

You inspired your peoples in service in and across communities.

With your presence and gifts released freely into lives and agencies encouraging belief that

the world can be changed by lives of caring lovingkindness.

You continue to call people to yourself and create the possibility for those you gather to serve you and each other in many ways.

With your people gathered in worship, scattered in service, and knowing your grace through Word and Sacrament.

You have given every good gift and equipped for every needed service.

So with the saints of every age we praise and thank you and seek your blessing on our time together this day.

Confession: God, you created all things and generously provided them for our good and for the fullness of life for all. You gather us together as sheep without a shepherd, the lost and loonely, the weary and bewildered, and still we reject, misuse, and keep for ourselves your most generous gifts. In the name of Jesus, and through the grace of your Holy Spirit, forgive us for not living with gratitude, joy, and a compulsion to share in your reign of justice, mercy, and hope.

Silence

Assurance: God is love. Through Christ God forgives us all that leads into brokenness and away from God's gifts of life. Take hold of this forgiveness and live your lives in the freedom and power of God's Holy Spirit. **Amen!**

TIME FOR STORYTELLING AND LISTENING

Your Word, O God, is a lamp to our feet: **a light to our path** (Read by Kristina Parish)

From the First Testament - Exodus 20.1-4, 7-9, 12-20

Then God spoke all these words, ²“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me.

⁴“You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.

⁷“You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

⁸“Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labour and do all your work.

¹²“Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³“You shall not murder.

¹⁴“You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵“You shall not steal.

¹⁶“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

¹⁷“You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, male or female slave, ox, donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.”

¹⁸ When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid^[d] and trembled and stood at a distance ¹⁹and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen, but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” ²⁰Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid, for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin.”

From the New Testament – Matthew 21.33-46

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants: ³³“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went away. ³⁴When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce.

³⁵ But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other slaves, more than the first, and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷ Then he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ ³⁹ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

⁴⁰ Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” ⁴¹ They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

⁴² Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures:

‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes?’

⁴³ “Therefore I tell you; the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces its fruits. ⁴⁴ The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Song TiS 674 (verses 1-3) Inspired by love and anger

Prayer and witness: “Ten Words – many rules?” –

some words for reflection and consideration ... extracts

from the blog of Revd Dr John Squires – the whole to be found at; <https://johntsqires.com/>

*“... **Two tablets of stone.** Moses is given “two tablets of stone” by God, who informs him that they contain “the law (torah) and the commandment (mitsvah), which I have written for their instruction (horotam, from yara)” (24:12). The Hebrew words used here are part of a larger group of terms which describe all the instructions given throughout the first five books of scripture, the Torah. These tablets are later described as having been written “by the finger of God” (31:8), noting also that “the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved upon the tablets” (32:6).*

“These two tablets are the ones that are notoriously broken by Moses in his anger when he discovers that the Israelites, in his absence, had made an image of a golden calf (32:19). This leads to the production of a replacement set of stone tablets, which Moses himself wrote under God’s instructions (34:1–4, 28).

“These two tablets have most likely influenced the interpretation of the Ten Words as comprising one set of words in which the orientation is towards God (“you shall have no other gods ... you shall not make an idol ... you shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God ... remember the sabbath day”, 20:2–11) and a second set oriented towards other humans (“honour your father and your mother, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbour, [and] you shall not covet”, 10:12–17). This, in turn, may have been an influence on the later rabbinic exposition (taken up by Jesus) of the Law as requiring love of God and love of neighbour (see Mark 12:28–31 and parallels).

*“... **Numbering the list of ten.** Judaism, unlike Catholicism and Protestantism, considers “I am the Lord, your God” to be the first “commandment”. Catholicism, unlike Judaism and*

Protestantism, considers coveting property to be separate from coveting a spouse. Protestantism, unlike Judaism and Catholicism, considers the prohibition against idolatry to be separate from the prohibition against worshipping other gods. No two religions agree on a single way to divide this stream of words into a list of ten distinct commands. So whose list should we follow?"

Food for thought ... and life ...

TIME FOR RESPONDING

Song TiS 674 (verses 4-6) From those for ever shackled

Prayers of the People –Including – the lands and peoples of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico (Prepared by Heather Baxter)

"As we prepare for our prayers for others, we light this candle to remember all those who are part of our church community but who are not at worship with us today." Light the candle

"We are all faced with hard truths that must be communicated. How we express our truth – our timing, our words, our approach – can mean the difference between a ruined relationship and genuine understanding." (From Dr Charles Foster: "Truth Without Fear")

As we come to the last week of preparation before the Referendum regarding the Aboriginal and Islander recognition in the Constitution and Voice to Parliament, and more importantly the day after the results are received by the population, we wonder about our own communications skills.

Let us pray.

Father

In our hearts today is the forthcoming Referendum. With diverse views and expressions of truth, we pray that we will be people who can listen and respond with compassion to those who might consider that they have lost.

In our hearts today are the people who have made submissions to the Disability Royal Commission. We pray for a willingness on the part of government to respond with compassion and justice to the recommendations made in this report.

In our hearts today are the people who are battling mental illness even as they search for community and professional support. Remind us that it is our responsibility to speak to those close to us asking "R U OK".

In our hearts today are the people who have no stable accommodation – those sleeping in cars, on the streets or couch surfing from one friend's house to another. As governments ponder this astronomical problem within the whole of Australia, we pray that planning teams responsible will be able to find just solutions to the housing crisis, including a sizeable proportion of public housing. We pray that our hearts will be big enough to accept that if the required homes are in our neighbourhoods, we will be able to be understanding and welcoming instead of aggressively against such an idea.

Jesus, you are closer to our heart than the breath that we breathe. You have promised that you will always be with us through the dark and the sunny times. You are the reason that we pray for others and for ourselves. Help us to be our best selves for you – loving and caring for those on the edges of society as well as the mainstream.

In your name we pray.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer (please pray the version you are most familiar with).

We say together

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

Song (TIS) 571 Forth in your name, O Lord, I go

The Blessing: We remember who we are, and we receive the promise of God's presence with us whatever we do and wherever we go.

All respond by singing a blessing to one another: (TIS 779)

May the feet of God walk with you, and God's hand hold you tight.

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

May the smile of God be for you, and God's breath give you life.

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

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We put out the Christ light (candle) remembering that Christ goes with us and meets us in the world.

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 & NOTICES