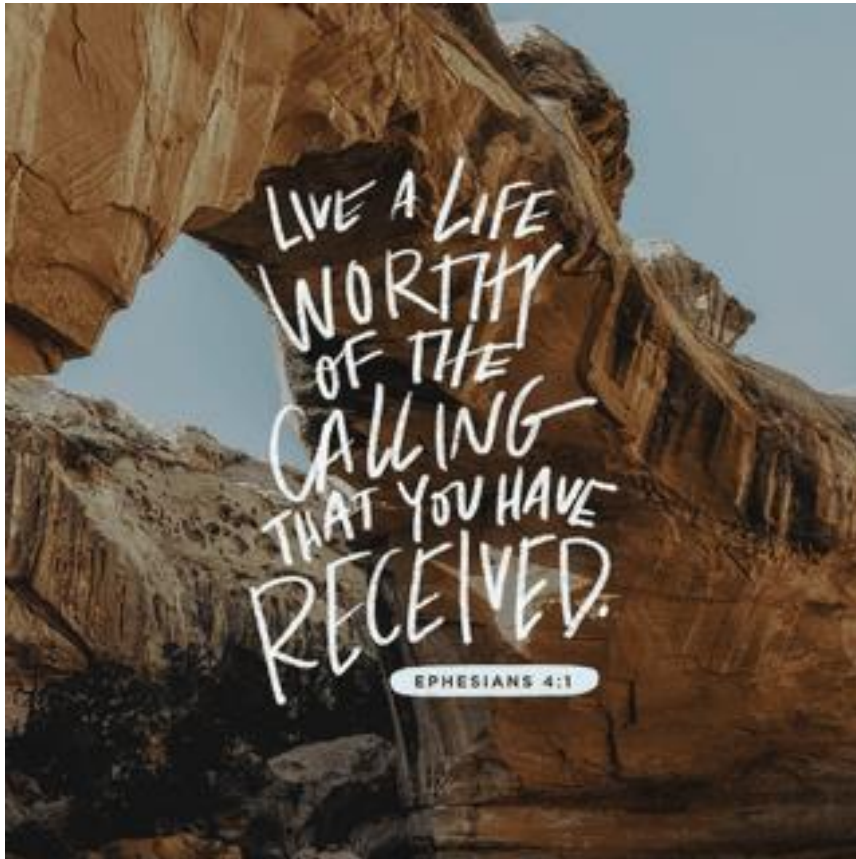


ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



4 AUGUST 2024

PENTECOST 11



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.

“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”

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY:

From before recorded time, the First Peoples cared for this Land. We praise the Creator for the beauty of this land and honour those who have offered themselves in tending it. We acknowledge the Elders and communities who have told the sacred stories and nurtured faithfulness to the Creator. We ask God’s blessing on those who continue to work for the healing and restoration of this land and her communities.

WELCOME and INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to worship at home. It is great to share this with you! In the service we read an horrific story of a National Leader who thought he could have whatever he wanted including a woman who he desired, Though, she was married to another man. This national leader solved that problem easily – he ensured the woman’s husband gets killed in military service. I’ll leave the rest of the story for you to read.

The behaviour of that leader raises the question of what it is to ‘LEAD A WORTHY LIFE!’

I wonder what you think a worthy life might look like.

That is a proposal worth pondering, I guess?

CALL TO WORSHIP:

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Jesus said: I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never thirst.

³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

Come, eat well here today. ‘Feed on the word, feed on the life that is given for us.’

Let us worship God and sing of the one who meets us here.

HYMN TiS 474: Here in this place

PRAYERS OF ADORATION, CONFESSION & ASSURANCE OF PARDON:

ADORATION:

Let us pray

O God our creator, every atom of our being sings your praise in the glorious symphony of creation. We sing of your creative love that makes us all that we are. Your love flows in our breath and moves with the rhythm of our heartbeat. With all your creatures, with mountain and ocean, with raindrop and sunbeam, with blackwood and wattlebird, O God, we rejoice in you.

But we give thanks that you are not content simply to create. In Christ you come near. You come to live with us, sharing our pain, our joy, our life. Even die for us. And by the Father's grace transform, renew and grant new life for all! And through the ever-loving breath of your Holy Spirit you are in every moment of our living, never ceasing to nourish and sustain us in a life worthy of your calling.

Your love is so immense and free and we would bask forever in its light.

CONFESSION:

But we must confess that our love is uncertain, tentative, a shadow of your radiant passion.

When our love fails, when our hearts grow dim, O God, our Creator, forgive and renew us. Create in us a clean heart...

ASSURANCE OF PARDON: HYMN TIS 712: *Sing or say:* Create in us a clean heart, O God. (x2)

'Create in us a clean heart, O God.

Renew within us a right spirit.

Cast us not away from your presence, o Lord,
and take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Restore to us fullness of joy,

-the joy that springs from your salvation.

Lighten our minds, shelter our lives

with your Spirit free.'

Amen.

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD: Read by Mardie Townsend

Your Word, Oh Lord, is a lamp to our feet; **A light to our path**

2 SAMUEL 11:26 - 12:13

When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him.

²⁷When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD, ¹²and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, 'There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. ²The rich man had very many flocks and herds; ³but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meagre fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him.' ⁵Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die;

⁶he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.'

7 Nathan said to David, 'You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; ⁸I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. ⁹Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. ¹¹Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. ¹²For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.'¹³David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' Nathan said to David, 'Now the LORD has put away your sin; you shall not die.

EPHESIANS 4:1-16

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it is said,

'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive;
he gave gifts to his people.'

⁹(When it says, 'He ascended', what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) ¹¹The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

JOHN 6:24-35

²⁴So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. ²⁵When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" ²⁶Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal."

²⁸Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" ²⁹Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

³⁰So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?" ³¹Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" ³²Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven,

but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” ³⁴They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” ³⁵Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

The gospel of the Lord

Praise to you. Lord Jesus Christ

PREACHING OF THE WORD: A Worthy Life.

I was pretty angry leading up to preparing this service and particularly this sermon. Then writing it made me even angrier. The point at which my anger began to ebb was on the third or fourth reading of the opening to Paul’s 4th chapter of the letter to the church at Ephesus.

It bears repeating.

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Maybe I should just finish the sermon right there with a rousing AMEN, Hallelujah, AMEN!

But you are not going to get off that lightly!

Today’s readings may be understood around the injunction of the epistle, to “lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” To “lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” The call of God to a particular life, is a deep conviction of the people of God.

A worthy life!

The call of God to a particular life is a deep conviction of the people of God, inclusive of the people of Ormond Uniting Church, including even angry Ron!

Why was I angry? Well this is a sermon, not a counselling service! So, maybe I should listen to my own preaching better, particularly from 2 weeks ago, when I urged us all, to take it easy, in the Lord. Rest in the Lord, rest in Jesus!

LORD, I believe, help my unbelief Jesus!

A worthy life!

So, first, I was really angry with King David. Using his position to take what he wanted, murdering one of his own and taking the murdered man’s wife into his bed! Murderer and adulterer! Not something we usually discuss in sermons and certainly not something we expect from our Kings and Queens and Presidents (Hmmm!?! Presidents!) and Prime Ministers, is it? But something I am sure we would agree does not reflect a worthy life!

I find it quite remarkable that a person like Donald Trump could still be in line to rule a nation – I guess he’s not a murderer - adulterer yes, and in St Paul’s words, not displaying a lot of, and I quote, ‘*humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*’ Doesn’t quite fit Trump, does it, but then again, St Paul himself, before he, literally, saw the light, and was converted to Christianity in a Damascus Road experience, persecuted and

murdered the followers of Jesus. In Jesus, St Paul discovered the key to living a worthy life.

In Paul's letter to the people at Ephesus, a "worthy" life consists in maximizing one's peculiar gifts for the sake of the community; that is summoned to live a trusting, caring unity. An 'unworthy' life is one that refuses to maximize one's gifts or, conversely, that refuses to offer those gifts for the sake of the community.

The key to a worthy life is authentic faithfulness.

So, whether it was the right way to feel (according to St Paul) or not, my anger welled up again as a result of the short-sighted mob who followed Jesus around the countryside, looking for a free feed! But struggled to see anything more of worth, than filling their guts.

Of course, people like the idea of a full belly – who wouldn't!?! But they are not satisfied – they are always seeking more of the same. Yet the food that sustains is staring them in the face, but still they are not 'getting it – understanding - believing!'

And if I am really honest, if I had been there, I suspect I too would have been tearing around the countryside to get a free feed and perhaps healed of my sore back and even have the demon anger chased out of my life! And not much beyond that!

So, God forgive me for my lack of faith, my unworthiness.

My blindness to the true gift on offer!

The true gift on offer?? What do I mean?

Well, there follows an exchange between Jesus and the crowd about what 'works' they are called to do.

He debates with them the meaning of the bread which gives life and finally leads them to the declaration that: He himself is the sign, the miracle, the divine manifestation of the 'bread that truly fills.'

He says, '*... it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' ³⁴They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." ³⁵Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'*

Jesus IS the Christ, is the Messiah, the Saviour of the world – who already has made all things new. He died on the cross for us and the world – he is the ONLY 'work', our only 'work,' that we need - believing that, accepting him as Saviour, accepting that Bread of heaven, and living in and through that glorious, gracious person and truth. This bread will fill more than your gut!

That is all! Jesus is all in all – hallelujah – take my anger upon your cross Lord Jesus, and make me whole – hallelujah! He IS the worthy giver of life! Hallelujah!

Two quotes to finish, concerning 'worthy living.'

First from St Paul.

'he gave gifts to his people.'

"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, (for building up the body of Christ) ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro, and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,'

And from Bishop Tom Wright.

'It doesn't take too much reflection to see where our own society is in all of this, not least in the way sin and selfishness deceive, darken understanding, and twist logic so that people start to believe good is evil and evil is good. Inside the church, as well as outside, there are such things as trickery, cunning, and pseudo-doctrines which carry off those who lack the maturity to spot the flaw. Teaching and leadership are what's needed, AND WHAT'S GIVEN IN CHRIST; they are the marks, and the means, of the community which reflects the renewing and transforming love of God.'

Let us pray

HYMN TiS 693: Come as you are

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: Prepared by Di Richter

"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.

Let us pray:

Jesus – you are the bread of the world. We ask that you receive our prayers for all your people.

For those who hunger for freedom, for justice, for release from poverty and disease;

For all who struggle for the peace and welfare of the world.

When we are greedy and take what is not ours, when we stockpile food while others starve

Put a right spirit within us, that we may share the resources of the earth and feed your hungry people.

Jesus, in your mercy

Hear the prayers we offer

Jesus, food of pilgrims, receive our prayers for your body, the church,

For all who hunger to know your forgiveness and love;

For ministers, teachers, those who provide pastoral care and everyone who brings your good news to others, empower us anew that we may be strengthened for your ministry and feed your hungry people

Jesus, in your mercy

Hear the prayers we offer

Jesus, true and living bread, receive our prayers for our community,

For those whose daily needs for food and shelter are unmet;

For those whose longings for recognition and love go unsatisfied;

For our neighbours, our families and all whom we hold dear.

When we turn away from the needs of those around us, when our relationships with others are unforgiving and unkind, help us to grow into your likeness, that we may bring your love to others and feed your hungry people.

Jesus, in your mercy

Hear the prayers we offer

Jesus, bread of life, receive our prayers for all who are in need:

For all in anguish, sorrow, confusion or fear,

For all who are sick or in pain.

When we wander in the desolate places of life, when we abandon ourselves to your goodness, fill our emptiness and satisfy our longings. Make us courageous in adversity and give us compassion for all who suffer that we may feed your hungry people.

Jesus, in your mercy

Hear the prayers we offer

Jesus, bread of heaven, hear our prayers for all who have died:

We give you thanks for prophets and apostles, for martyrs and evangelists, and for the faithful people of this congregation who have gone before us.

Jesus, in your mercy

Hear the prayers we offer

Jesus – bread for all,

Sustain us in our brokenness and feed us that we may be equipped to open the eyes, lives, hearts and minds of the world to God's love for us all.

In Jesus name we pray,

Amen

(based on prayers by Janet Nelson)

Let us pray.

**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 569: Guide Me O thou Great Redeemer

DISMISSAL:

Fed by the bread of life, go out to nourish the world.

³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

BLESSING:

And may the blessing of God
who is the Source, the Bread and the Breath of life, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be upon you and remain with you always.

AMEN

WORD OF MISSION:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen

POSTLUDE

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

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Presider: Rev Ron Townsend

Music: Peter Hurley

Church Office

Tuesdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Thursdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Fridays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Phone: 0411 958 127

office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

Website: www.ormondunitingchurch.org

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